The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Character Creation

I am a 42-year-old single living in a certain provincial city. My occupation? Salaryman.

Neither my looks nor abilities warrant any special mention. Well, I think that my specs are at least average. Unfortunately, marriage is the only thing that I've had zero luck with.

As for my hobbies, I think gaming is about it.

I've dived quite deeply into the minor genre of tabletop RPG, to the point where I've organized conventions and helped write doujinshis. I haven't been able to play much in the past ten years though.

However, this commonplace life of mine ended quite suddenly.

Right now, I'm in a space with absolutely nothing inside.

Nothing above, nothing below; I can't even register my own body. It's like my

self-consciousness is the only thing floating in this void.

“I kind of wanted to live out 20 more years or so……”

The only thing I understand is that I’ve already died.

My social acquaintances, friends, family, neighbors. Unfinished work. Novels and TRPG books that I had yet to read. Games that I had yet to play.

The emptiness of losing all those envelopes me.

I’m not exactly regretting the 20 years of holding back on gaming for the sake of work, but now that things have become like this, I’m thinking that it might not have been so bad to do more of the things that I’d wanted to do.

After having lost even the sense of time, a voice suddenly calls out to me.

“I am ‘The Guardian.’”

I can’t see him, and it is also impossible for me to be hearing his voice. Despite that, I am properly receiving his words.

“From now, you will be transferring over to a world beyond the event horizon of this one. In other words, a parallel world.”

“Parallel world? Transfer?”

There is a mountain of things that I want to ask, but I can’t properly put them into words.

“I looked up this dimension’s information, and ‘parallel world transfer’ seems to be the most apt descriptor.”

“I understand.”

Out of habit, I voiced my acknowledgment.

I’m not sure what that says about me as a salaryman, but I think that there is some part of me that has already accepted all this.

I am aware that of late, this genre is quite popular in anime and light novels. In the first place, before even the term ‘light novel’ was coined, the parallel world transfer and reincarnation genre has already existed. As examples, there are A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court and the John Carter series.

(T/N: The first one is really great fun. The second, never heard of it.)
“So, after I get transferred over, what then?”

“A physical body will be made to facilitate your actions in the other world, so please provide me with the necessary information. The other world will be, in the terms of this world, ‘a fantasy world of swords and magic,’ so something adaptable to that would be preferable.”

“Physical body in a fantasy world……”

Fantasy world? New body?

When I heard those words, what first came to mind was my character in the western TRPG Dungeons & Braves, which I had played for so many of my school years.

Having reached max level under super rank rules after 7 years, this character is the one that I have the greatest attachment to.

Wizard [Great Mage] Gio Margils.

“Searching completed. Based on the rulebook in your own room, supplements, settings reference notebooks, and character sheet, the physical and mental abilities of ‘Gio Margils,’ as well as all personal belongings, shall be reproduced. However, due to possible negative effects on your pysche, alterations will not be performed upon your outer appearance.”

In other words, this God or superior entity has looked through the notebooks that I had filled during my student days. Right now, I am unnaturally calm, so there’s no effect, but if it was the usual me, this would be the part where I repeatedly slam my head against a wall.

That aside…… seriously?

“Creation of Gio Margils completed.”

Along with ‘The Guardian’s words, the feeling of having a body returns to me.

Black robe, satchel, staff in one hand.

My appearance is still that of an average black-haired, black-eyed Japanese, so it totally feels like I’m cosplaying. However, my insides have definitely been altered, as evidenced by this unbelievable amount of vitality that I am feeling.

“Is there any damage to your knowledge or memory?”

“..... I do not believe so.”

Indeed, inside of my head is Gio Margils' magical skills, the techniques to make his magical items, and the way to use his personal items. All of the various 'settings' that I, with the help of my game master, had diligently written down have now been etched into me as 'knowledge.'

"I really have become my TRPG character……"

'Gio Margils' is a level 36 magic user, a maxed-out character even under super rank rules.

The excitement, as well as unease, of having become such an existence envelopes around me.

The game called 'D&B' is commonly thought of as a dull one where groups of characters clear dungeons filled with bats and mice and goblins, with one or more party deaths before the ending a guarantee.

Those used to the more modern TRPGs that emphasize on flashy characters and detailed storylines would be unable to believe this, but D&B is exactly that kind of game.

However, that dullness is limited to the basic rules. As the character grows, the nature of the adventures change drastically. There are a total of 4 sets of rules that correspond to character growth: basic rules, mid rank rules, upper rank rules, and super rank rules. For characters that have reached super rank, having founded a country or being a guildmaster is a given, and they are mostly occupied with fighting against gods or devils in other dimensions or out in space, or taking part in equally epic history-changing wars. Depending on circumstances, they might even be on an adventure towards becoming a god themselves.

Such growth would require clearing at least a hundred scenarios. Even I had spent more than 7 years nurturing Gio.

If I was the game master of a short TRPG session, there is no way that I'd be allowed to use this character.

With the exception of scenarios specially planned out for super high level characters, it is only all too obvious that Gio is a game breaker.

"Doing all this, what is it that you want of me?"

"After the transfer, I will neither interfere with your actions nor give you any orders."

After going to the trouble of transferring me to a parallel world, telling me to do as I please?

There is definitely a hidden agenda somewhere.

I can feel it, not from his words, but from the atmosphere being given off by the one who's named himself as 'The Guardian.'

"The punchline wouldn't be that after I make a magic user, it turns out that I can't use Gio's magic in the other world, right?"

There just might be the possibility that rather than a fantasy world, this actually turns out to be a black science fiction. If something seems too good to be true, first doubt it--that is a trait that I've gained from being a salaryman.

"The magic from this game is different from that of the parallel world on a fundamental level, but its processes still lie within the range of the existent laws.

It is the same for your physical abilities and knowledge.”

“Are you sure things are fine like this? I might completely mess up this other world.”

“If such is your intention, I do not mind.”

Well, I mind.

Although it’s true that I’ve had dreams of becoming Gio, I have neither the energy nor desire to do anything on the scale of saving or destroying the world. If this had happened 20-or-so years earlier, my answer might have been different though.

This is, so to speak, my mandatory retirement, I guess?

Be it a parallel world or Japan, I’d be satisfied as long as I get to eat good food everyday, enjoy hot springs, and read interesting books. If I am to get extravagant, then I would also add being able to play TRPGs to the list. My age being what it is, I’m no longer particularly desperate for women.

While convincing myself in this way, ‘The Guardian’ has his last say.

“With this, you will now be transferred to the parallel world called the ‘Sedia Continent’ in the language of its inhabitants.”

With those words, my consciousness fades to black.

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Chapter 2: Hot Start

“..... What the heck is up with this?”

When my consciousness returned to me, I found myself inside a jail cell.

One side is a row of rusted iron bars. The remaining three walls are all stone. The ceiling is high, almost 3m up, with a small skylight.

A dirty, old rag for a bed, and a hole in the floor seemingly for waste. This is all that encompasses my entire world.

In addition, there are wooden shackles on both of my hands.

Beyond the iron bars, I see another empty cell that looks exactly the same.

“What a hot start……”

It is indeed true that ‘The Guardian’ did not specify my circumstances after the transfer. Perhaps some of the blame is on me, for not asking……

I didn’t ask because I somehow had the expectation of being in the middle of a grassy plain, or inside a forest, or even some ruins.

“If this was a scenario written by a game master, then he must be someone with a terrible personality.”

I grumble to myself while standing up to confirm my situation.

In this case, the ‘game master’ would be The Guardian, wouldn’t it? He didsay I’m free to do whatever I want, but I do not plan on taking him at his word and completely cutting loose. The reason is because there is absolutely no way that something this elaborate would be done without any purpose.

Judging by the fact that light is coming in from the hole above my head, it must be currently noontime.

Right now, I have on a snug pair of pants and a long-sleeved shirt. My feet are, surprise surprise, bare.

My robe, my staff, and even the sling bag with my important spellbook inside are all nowhere to be seen. Even the rings that were supposed to be on my hands, all of which were magical items, have been stripped away.

“Is there no limit to the figure of speech ‘suddenly and precipitately’..... Dying so suddenly, then going to a strange dimension all of a sudden, and even suddenly becoming a TRPG character……”

(T/N: In case anyone’s curious, the phrase used here is 急転直下.)

Feeling extremely tired, I lean against the wall and hold my head.

“Haaaaa---- I’ve really come to a parallel world.”

I find myself worrying about my previous world, such as who will find my corpse, and my preparations for next week’s meeting being still unfinished.

This might be a situation where I really should take action immediately, but I had to take several deep breathes to calm myself down.

After being dazed for several minutes, my mind finally starts working.

“Well, even without my items, as long as I can use my spells…… Speaking of which, I don’t have my spellbook either!”

The harsh reality that I realize once again causes me to go pale.

“Not having my spellbook…… This is quite serious.”

Spellbook.

This item is the most important thing for all D&B wizards.

Wizards in D&B must read their spellbooks every morning in order to ‘charge [prepare]’ the spells that they will use that day.

Furthermore, after a spell is used, it disappears from the wizard’s consciousness, and cannot be used anymore until it is ‘charged’ again the next morning.

Rather, before even that, if I don’t have any spells charged at the moment…… and without my items also, that would make the current me nothing more than

an ordinary person.

Despite having been an ordinary person for 42 years, I feel a strong sense of discomfort.

“Spells, do I even have any spells charged……”

Aside from the time spent playing D&B, I have never used a spell before in real life. When I scour the corners of my brain like I would for a math formula……

“Ah, found it.”

I do indeed find a sort of independent energy in a corner of my mind. This must be the spells that I have charged. Chants, or in other words, the processes to activate those spells, naturally pop up in my brain.

Besides that, all of the knowledge that ‘Gio Margils’ had acquired have been imprinted into my own brain. I do have the ability to re-create my spellbook from scratch, but such an undertaking would require an enormous amount of time, money, and effort.

“I should slip out of here. And while on the way, I should definitely retrieve at least my spellbook. In the first place, who is it that put me in here anyway?”

The growing sense of danger is apparently helping my mind to start working again.

Escape is indeed important, but before that, I need to get an understanding of my current situation.

I search my jail cell, but as expected, what I am looking for is not here.

“Should I quickly use a spell and get out of here?”

What makes D&B wizards wrack their brains most is the choosing of what spells to charge for the day, and when best to use those spells.

I (as in Gio) am a max level wizard, so I am able to charge 9 spells for each and every level from 1 to 9. Conversely, having a total of 81 spells makes things more complicated.

If I want to open my shackles and my cell door, I have [Wizard Lock]. If I simply want to get away from here, then [Teleport] would do the trick. But then again, I don’t knowthe situation in my surroundings, so I cannot use [Teleport].

“For starters, let’s secure myself some peace of mind.”

Though I had a hard time deciding, I decided to use the [Invincible] spell in the end.

This is a level 9 spell, considered the most difficult level. What it does is grant me complete resistance against all attacks with normal weapons, as well as all spells at least 3 levels lower. Duration is 6 hours. It is an absolute necessity when preparing for the worst situations.

“Now then…… I wonder whether I can actually use my spells properly……”

After taking several deep breathes, I begin the ‘magical chant’ that I had repeated so many times back during the game.

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Chapter 3: Spell Archive

The way to use my spells is all inside my head.

More than 20 years ago, with the D&B rulebook as the base, the game master of the time and I had fleshed out the settings to an almost unnecessarily detailed degree.

I'm impressed that 'The Guardian' could understand everything in that messy notebook.

"..... Guess there's no other option that to just do it, I guess."

I take a deep breath, then close my eyes.

What I am about to do now is dive deep inside myself, deeper than even 'instinct' and the 'unconscious self,' to the 'Expanse of Chaos,' and release the energy needed for spellcasting from there.

I regulate my breathing and concentrate my consciousness.

First of all, I image the ‘Inner World.’

A space enveloped by darkness.

Normally speaking, it is very hard to imagine oneself in elaborate detail. However, almost immediately, a duplicate of myself—wearing a wizard’s robe—appears inside the darkness. This is most likely due to Gio’s abilities.

I carefully superimpose the ‘imagined me inside the Inner World’ over ‘the real-life me standing in a jail cell.’

When the two are completely overlapped, I imagine my real self dissolving into my imagined self, then slowly open my eyes.

…… Pure darkness.

The jail cell that my eyes should have registered is nowhere to be found. I am clad in the robe that my imagined self had on.

This place is inside myself, the ‘Inner World.’

Raising my right hand, I visualize a lantern illuminating the darkness.

At once, a lantern materializes, shining on my surroundings with a powerful light tinged with red.

“Amazing…… isn’t this a bit too realistic…… uwah!?”

The weight and heat of the lantern, as well as the smell of oil, is all so realistic

that I am shaken for a moment.

Being shaken—it is the doubt, to be more exact—causes the ‘Inner World’ to buckle.

An unnatural sick feeling assaults my entire body. The sensation is as if I am being pulled in all directions at the same time.

“Haa~..... Fuu~.....”

Despite my panic, I steady my breathing and refocus my consciousness. Somehow, the buckling stops.

“That was a close one……”

This is still inside the ‘Inner World,’ so a slip in visualization is only going to be punished with a sick feeling, but if this happens further down the stairs, my imagined self could be erased along with my real self’s consciousness……. Who the hell was it again who came up with such a dangerous setting.

After taking another deep breath, I raise the lantern.

The soft light illuminates a ‘door’ standing in front of me.

This is the ‘Door of Wizardry.’

It is roughly 3m in height. Unsettling carvings depicting all sorts of magical icons cover the door in its entirety.

This is the intersection between the ‘Inner World’ and the ‘Expanse of Chaos,’

the entrance and exit, and the symbol of its protective wall.

The ‘Expanse of Chaos’ from here on is, at the same time, still the inside of my own consciousness. If I’m to express this in the terms of psychology, then it can probably be called the ‘collective unconscious,’ a place even deeper down than ‘instinct’ and the ‘unconscious self.’

As if in invitation, the ‘Door of Wizardry’ opens, revealing stone stairs heading downwards.

I slowly descend the staircase while relying on the lantern’s light. It is a counter-clockwise spiral.

The is the path to travel to send my consciousness from my own heart’s ‘Inner World’ to the ‘Expanse of Chaos.’ Just like the ‘Door of Wizardry,’ this too is a construction of my heart from long years of training (or so goes the setting).

If the visualization of the door, walls, or stairs was in an incomplete state when my consciousness makes contact with the ‘Expanse of Chaos,’ then I would be swallowed by an overwhelming chaos and turn into a vegetable.

But well, as expected of the level 36 Gio’s visualization. The coldness, hardness, and coloring of the walls, as well as the flow and smell of air,are both so realistic as to be indistinguishable from reality.

Subjectively speaking, after descending several tens of steps, I come across a landing with a door. This here is the 1st floor.

There is a plate on the door indicating that beyond is the [Spell Archive of the Novice].

If it was for the purpose of practice, then it would be fine to find a level 1 spell from here and use it, but what I'm looking for this time is on the lowest floor.

Crossing the landing, I continue down the spiral staircase.

2nd floor…. 4th floor…… 7th floor…….. 8th floor…

"I've arrived, at the 9th floor……"

[Spell Archive of the Great Wizard].

Its appearance is pretty much the same as all the previous floors.

However, the pressure of the swirling and rumbling 'chaos' on the other side of the wall can be felt very powerfully.

If I had to put it into words, this place is an imagined space that has been granted transient shape within a great sea of shapeless energy that is 'chaos.' If the textured walls come down, then this entire space, along with myself, would all disappear into nothingness.

Even while swallowing my saliva with an audible gulp, I hold aloft the lantern and draw towards the door, which, of course, opens without a sound.

Beyond the door is a library with rows of gigantic bookshelves.

I'm not sure of the exact size of the room. Maybe about the size of a classroom? And immediately in front of me are 9 large bookrests. On each bookrest is a thick, heavy book.

Each and every book is the symbol of the energy of a different spell. If a book is lying on a bookrest, then that is indication that its respective spell has already been charged.

[Time Stop], [Meteor], [Create All Monster]..... [Invincible].

“It’s here, it’s here.”

I find the book which contains the spell that I’m looking for, and lightly touch it.

Its thickness seems to hint at several hundreds of pages, but what I’m looking for is on only one of the pages. Almost as if the book is alive, the sheets flip by themselves and stop at the desired page.

Well then, from here on is the real deal. I take a deep breath, then read aloud the chant written on the book. The real me still inside the jail cell should be spinning the exact same words at the same time.

“By the means of this spell, my body shall, for the next 6 hours, be enveloped in an invisible barrier that negates all attacks from normal weapons and all spells 3 or more levels lower than this one.”

Largely similar to the explanation description in the rulebook, this part is where I give detailed instructions for how the spell is to be activated. For example, if I am using an attack spell instead, I can specify the range or intended target of the spell.

“..... [Invincible].”

After reciting the keyword that releases the energy of this spell into the real world, all procedures to activate the spell have been completed.

The book of [Invincible] glows brightly and turns into a clump of energy that flies toward the ceiling and passes straight through…… heading up in the direction of the real world.

What is left are the other 8 bookrests, still with a book on top, and the newly vacated bookrest. If I had a character sheet or a status window, it would say something like “Level 9 Spells 8/9.”

I also leave the [Archive of the Great Wizard] and ascend the spiral staircase. I could just forcibly sever the link with my imagined self right here and now, but for caution’s sake, I properly climb all the stairs and return to the ‘Inner World.’

Back in the ‘Inner World,’ I close my eyes and cut off my real self from my imagined self.

“..... Fuu. I’m back.”

When I open my eyes, I find myself back in the jail cell.

I look over my shackled hands and my entire body. There is a thin, white fog-like substance that has become a membrane surrounding my entire body. It’s to the level where even I would have to strain my eyes to see it, and other people shouldn’t see it at all.

In other words, the spell [Invincible] has indeed been activated.

It is a bit plain for a level 9 spell, but its effects should be quite tremendous.

“So I…… really can use my spells.”

My body feels like chanting that spell had taken a whole hour, but it was actually only exactly 10 seconds.

Time flows different in the ‘Inner World.’ No matter how much I rush, I would still need 10 seconds. As this system was originally a game, so nothing can be done about it, but it’s just that during those 10 seconds, I am, for all effects and purposes, completely unguarded. With that in mind, I am going to have to be extremely careful about when to use spells.

Man, what a predicament.

I feel like I understand why Gandalf wasn’t helping out by blasting magic left and right.

After confirming that I really can use my spells, I unconsciously let down my guard.

I spent the next 5 minutes or so idly.

However, this lull was cut short by another’s hand.

Noisy footsteps and loud talking voices draw towards my cell.

“Oi, come out!”

“It’s the interrogation, the interrogation!”

Yelling at me through the iron bars are three men wearing what looks to be dirty leather armor.

——Ahh, I see. Mountain bandits.

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Chapter 4: "What will you do next?"

“Get the fuck out here already.”

“Hurry up, you retard.”

On the other side of the iron bars, three dirty-looking men are raising a fuss.

Blond and brown hair, Caucasian-looking facial structure and body builds. Leather armor. Axes hanging from their back or swords sheathed at their waist.

Hmm, how else to put it? Yep, they’re definitely mountain bandits.

“.....”

I’m feigning coolness, but the reality is that my body has become petrified.

Ever since my coming-of-age ceremony, I’ve been in exactly zero fights. I haven’t even had any run-ins with delinquents.

(T/N: Coming-of-age ceremony = 20 years old)

In contrast, the attitudes of the 3 before me make it abundantly clear that they are familiar with acts of violence.

“Dammit, giving me all this trouble.”

As if he’s only just realized that I can’t open the jail cell by myself, one of the men opens the iron lock and comes inside.

“Excuse me……?! Gehah.”

I didn’t even have time to brace myself before the man lands a full-power punch in my stomach.

[Invincible] is a spell that grants me resistance against weapons and magic. In other words, it does nothing at all for bare fists.

Extreme pain shoots throughout my abdomen, paralyzing my breathing.

“Make a fucking move on.”

All three of them come to me, who can’t even utter a peep, and drag me out of the cell and along the passageway.

While being dragged along the short passageway, I was able to, in the brief moment when I could look into the cell next to mine, see the figure of a young woman.

“..... Ah.”

Our eyes met for a split second, which was not enough to exchange any words.

“After we’ve dealt with this guy, we’ll give you plenty of love and attention.”

“Hiii!”

(T/N: In Japanese, ‘hii’ is a way of screaming (read like the pronoun ‘he,’ but stretched out as loud as the number of ‘i’s in there). It’s actually more like a very sharp intake of air then an actual scream, to be exact.)
Instead, one of the men call out to her vulgarly. The woman lets out a scream, but I am unable to do anything due to being in a panic from the fear and pain. Tears well up, not just from the pain, but also from a sense of powerlessness.

After passing through the door at the end of the passageway, I find myself in a courtyard surrounded by sturdy-looking stone walls. Standing alongside the front wall is a large tower also made of stone.

There are rough men all over the place, showering me with scorn and jeers.

“It’s the fake magician!”

“Show us how you can escape with your magic!”

“Hope you get buried already!”

I muse over what they mean by ‘fake magician,’ but no answer comes to me. I’m hustled to the center of the courtyard and made to kneel there.

With that, their rough handling finally ceases, so I’m able to at least survey my surroundings with my eyes. I’m not completely clueless about this kind of

scenery. Most likely, this place is the inside of a fort or a castle. Additionally, it should be these bandits' hideout. This is exactly like a setting in a game, but now that I'm present in the flesh, it's very hard for me to enjoy myself.

After pressing pressed down in place for several minutes, a man wearing a robe comes out of the building in front of me. He is holding a staff in each of his hands.

He looks very neurotic, and has sunken cheeks, a moustache, and a sharp nose.

Apparently this place is not a bandit's hideout, but rather an evil magician's stronghold.

"You bastard, who the hell are you?"

The robed man suddenly begins questioning me in a shrill voice.

"Where did you get your hands on this staff? You bastard, are you related to Afalusal?"

Before I can answer, he showers me with more questions. Now that I'm taking a better look, one of the staves that he's holding is actually mine.

Wizardry Staff. As commemoration for Gio reaching level 36, I had splurged half of my entire fortune at the time on making that powerful item.

"I, I am…… ah…… I am a wizard called Gio Margils. The staff is my personal property, and I know nothing at all about this Afalu-something of yours."

I was almost about to say my Japanese name, as I have for so many years as a salaryman, but I was able to catch myself in time. Oh right, I'm in a parallel

world. The laws and police and ethics of the safe and clean Japan can no longer protect me.

“Don’t you lie to me! You have no magical power! How could you use any magic?”

“Hah?”

No magical power?

“Give me a proper answer, you bastard!”

“Gofu!?”

After I unconsciously let slip a stupified exclamation, one of the bandits next to me plants his foot square in my gut.

“Gafu…… oh……!? Gohhhhh……”

“Hyahyahya! You look miserable!”

“If you’re going to play dumb, you’re gonna have to put more willpower into it!”

The pain is so great that my mind goes pure white. This is the first time in all 42 years of my life to receive so much punishment. But what frightens me most, even more than the violence, is the coarse laughter of these men, in which not even a twinge of conscience can be heard.

“I also don’t feel any magical power in this staff. However, this is definitely magic!”

The robed man brandishes my staff, and lightning crashes into the ground between the two of us. Bluish-white light sears into everyone's eyes, then a thunderous roar follows after a short delay.

"Uwah!?"

"Hii!?"

The lightning only lasted a moment, but the light and sound has caused the 3 men group and me to fall on our butts. It was due to the shockwave from from the lightning striking the ground. The surrounding bandits are all frozen with surprise.

"Awesome…… What was that……?"

"I've never seen magic like that in my life……"

Damn it. Looks like I had charged my Wizardry Staff with [Lightning]. Magical items in D&B are relatively simple, so it appears that he's figured out how to use it, but…… What did he mean by the staff not having magical power? My brain is not working well from all the pain and fear.

"What on earth is this magical tool that has no magical power?! If you're not a sorcerer from Afalusal, then is this something developed by those fools in the magi faction?! Spit it out!"

"I don't really have anything to spit ou-..... gefu!"

The robed man signals, and the three men group resume kicking and hitting me.

“Fun…… I get it now. You’re making light of me, eh? This great magician Jyagul-sama, eh?”

“Goho. I’m not mak-..... gah.”

I curl up in the fetus position and try to endure the violence. Seeing that, the robed man—Jyagul—snaps.

He orders the three men to pull up the ragged me. Both of my arms are being held, so I can’t move my body at all.

“HAH!”

Jyagul raises the other staff that he’s holding and shouts out a kiai of sorts.

“Ice Arrow!”

From the tip of his staff, something flies out…… and stabs into my shoulder!

“Gah…… GYAAAHHHH!!”

My shoulder has been pierced by something that feels terribly hot. When I look at it, however, it turns out to be an arrow made of ice.

It’s magic! He used magic to shoot me with an arrow made of ice!

This is strange, what happened to my own magic? [Invincible] is supposed to negate magic! Or is what he used actually something really high level?!

“How is your taste of real magic? If you don’t want to be iced, you’d better start

telling the truth!”

“As expected of Jyagul-sama!”

“Just finish off a guy like this already!”

“..... guh…… uuu……”

Neither Jyagul’s nor the bandits’ voices register in my ears. My shoulder hurts like it’s being torn up from the inside. It’s the first time in my life that I’ve been subjected to such violence and intense pain. My mind is currently filled with only fear…… and rage.

I’m sick of this pain. Am I going to be killed? I don’t want to die. Help me. I want to run away.

Why is this happening to me? I didn’t do anything to deserve this.

«What will you do next?»

Out of the blue.

Slicing through my fear-addled brain, the nostalgic voice of my game master reverberates inside my head.

Oh right. I’ve already overcome several tens of situations as bad as this one.

The tsukkomi that “that was only inside the game” rears up in my mind, but I

forcefully press it back down, and wrack my mind for a way to break out of this deadlock. The pain and disparagement are both ignored. The ‘sense of danger to my life’ that I’d been feeling from the start now sharpens my concentration to an unnatural level. Almost instantly, I reach the conclusion that I must use a spell.

My mind scrolls at super speed through the list of spells that I have charged, and I select one. This spell must completely seal all of Jyagul’s movements, and also be more than enough to intimidate the bandits. In all probability, Jyagul has possession of my spellbook, so merely running away is not an option. Of course, all spells that would kill him immediately are also filtered out.

“Cat got your tongue? Answer already!”

“You think staying quiet’s gonna help you?”

“Gafu.”

The kick on my back makes me fall flat on my face. Then the blow to my face and stomach causes my breath to get choked in my throat. But I merely grit my teeth and look up at Jyagul.

I begin chanting with a degree of coldness that surprises even myself.

“By means of this spell, he shall become as stone. [Stoned].”

(T/N: I swear, these keywords always have rubii on top to dictate their readings, and they all read out in English. I'm not the one choosing them.)
Both the construction of the Inner World and the passage through the Door of Wizardry goes much smoother than the first time. In the eyes of Jyagul and the bandits, I’m merely lying limp and mumbling something under my breath, but truth is that I’ve already gone down to the [Spell Archive of the Magical Enchanter] on the 5th floor and released the power of one of the spells there.

“If this is how you’re going to be, then a second magical demonstra-..... heh?”

At first, neither Jyagul nor the bandits understand what is happening.

I see both of Jyagul’s ankles, along with his shoes, turning stone gray.

“My feet are…… what the fuck is this?! I can’t move. Uwaaaahhh!?”

The change in color, in other words the petrification, progresses mercilessly upwards and eats up his shins, knees, and thighs.

Even his robe is not spared.

By the time the petrification reaches his waist, he, as well as the other bandits, finally understand what is happening.

“What’s going on?!”

“It's stone…… Jyagul-sama is turning into stone!”

“I can’t move, dammit! My body can't move!!”

With both legs completely turned to stone, Jyagul goes pale in the face and screams. All of the bandits, starting with the 3 who had been holding me down, have fallen into a state of confusion.

“Kill him! Kill that guy!!”

At the same time of Jyagul’s roar, I feel something touching my back, so I turn

around.

“What is…… Why is this guy……?!”

There are bandits standing stiffly with weapons bared. It seems that the [Invincible] spell has finally become of use.

“This bastard!”

“Why can’t I stab him?!”

All three of them are wailing on me with sword and axe, but the barrier enveloping my body blocks all their attacks, not letting through even the tiniest of shocks.

If they become calm and revert to using their bare hands, I would be finished right here and now.

However, the bandits do not have the leisure to do so.

“AHHHHH! STOP, STOP, STOP ITTTT! HELP ME~~~!”

Right now, Jyagul’s face is twisted with fear, but the petrification is still mercilessly marching on. Several seconds later, his entire body has been completely converted into a stone statue, with his face the very image of misery.

There was indeed a little bit of guilt about using this spell on a live human, but I couldn’t muster up much sympathy. I mean, I can use another spell to undo his petrification anytime I want to anyways. Having retrieved some presence of mind, I pat down my chest…… but then the pain from my shoulder revives, causing me to grimace.

“Haah…… Haah…… Zeehh……”

Silence now rules this fort. The only audible sound is that of my own ragged breathing. After a minute, or slightly less than that, a single bandit fearfully makes his way towards Jyagul.

“.....O, oi……”

“Jya-, Jyagul…... -sama?”

When he touches the sculpture that used to be Jyagul, it slowly falls over.

It’s a human-sized statue, so it made a pretty loud noise.

“He really turned into stone……”

“Did, did that guy do this…… ?”

All of the bandits’ eyes, which had been gathered towards the fallen Jyagul statue, now turn towards me. Of course, their eyes are no longer filled with the scorn and disdain from before, but rather fear and unease.

The coarse thought of “serves them right” does flit across my mind, but the pain from my shoulder tells me that this is not the time for that.

What I must do is chase these guys away as soon as possible.

Which means…… which means…… the pain is fogging up my thought process.

«What will you do next?»

The voice of my oldest TRPG buddy and my most trusted game master seemingly reverberates inside my head again.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 5

Chapter 5: Searching the Fort

While I am busy wracking my brain, the bandits have started to catch up with the situation. Starting with the 3 men group, all of them begin to inch away from me.

“It really must have been this guy who turned Jyagul-sama to stone, right……?”

“But wasn’t this guy not a magician……”

“The one who said that was Jyagul-sama, but look at him now!”

“Even if he’s a magician, he’s not holding a staff!”

On one side, there are still some of them with weapons up, trying to pressure me. They are teetering on a fine line between attacking me or running away, and the amount of tension in the air is such that a small push could send them over on either side.

Oh, whatever.

Rather than having thought it through, I use another spell sheerly out of the desire to be free of this tension.

“By means of this spell, may a platoon of 6 ogres be created from naught and be under my control for 3 full days. [Create Ogre Platoon].”

I chant a spell from the [Spell Archive of the Spritual Power Holder] on the 7th floor. The air distorts like the surface of a pond that has been disturbed by a rock.

“What is it this time?!”

As the bandits begin clamoring, buff demons with reddish-brown skin—ogres—emerge from the ripples in midair one after the other.

They are exactly 6 in number, and all sport gigantic bodies 3m in height and very mean-looking faces. They take a formation around me as if to protect me.

The bandits’ responses are truly dramatic.

“Hii……”

“A-, a-, anki……”

“This guy went and called up anki! He’s an ally of the anki!!”

(T/N: 暗鬼 is read as ‘anki’ in this series (I think) and means ‘shadow demons.’ I am opting to call them ‘anki’ from here on, cus typing ‘shadow demon’ every time is a pain.)

With axes and clubs and spears in hand, every one of the ogres are level 6. Matching their appearance, they are the type to fight using their enormous strength. The max level of monsters in D&B is 36, so these guys are by no means strong. However, a single one of them is already more than enough to take care of any average soldier or party of level 1 adventurers. I am still ignorant of this world's fighting strength, but I think having 6 of them should be sufficient for 10 or 20 bandits.

Possibly having come to that conclusion themselves (well I mean, it's pretty self-obvious), the bandits all turn to flee. The few who were next to the fort gates immediately wrestle open the side door built into the gate and disappear through it.

I wonder if 'anki' is what they call ogres in this world. I'm supposed to understand their words, but what 'anki' is specifically referring to is not clear to me. Along with the 'Afalusal' that Jyagul had mentioned, these words that I don't understand are bothering me, so I would like to confirm them as soon as possible.

By the way, the way to spell 'ogre' (with the alphabet) is 'ogre,' but it is normally pronounced closer to 'orc.' Most games released recently also go with 'orc,' but for some unknown reason, D&B had decided to stick with the French pronunciation of 'ogre' instead. There were weird points like this in a lot of the older games, weren't there~

"U-, UWAHHH!"

One member of the 3 men group takes his axe to the ogres in what can only be described as self-abandonment. Even if it lands properly, all it would do is cause a small wound, but an ogre speedily slaps the axe down with its own club.

“YOU…… WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!”

“FUCK YOU! WATCH ME TAKE YOU ON!”

“UWA, UWAHHHHH!”

The stand-off was broken in the blink of an eye. A few of the bandits are haphazardly attacking the ogres, while the rest are scrambling to get away. Due to the ogres being in formation around me, none of the attacks are aimed at me, but well……

“Please don’t kill any of them! Just chase them off!”

“Guruoo!”

The ogres respond to my command with a roar. There is absolutely no need at all for me to say ‘please,’ but the habits of a salaryman are not that easy to break.

“GAH!”

“GYAAHH?!”

“Gufuoh!?”

With every swing of an ogre’s club or spear or rock-like fist, bandits get blown into the air. The reason why there are no casualties yet is due in full to the ogres faithfully following my command. In contrast, the bandits’ attacks are dealing almost no damage at all to the ogres. Judging by how overwhelming the ogres are, these bandits must really be level 1 or 2 at best.

“THIS IS HOPELESS!!”

“I’M GETTING OUT OF HERE!”

“AH, WAIT FOR MEEEE~!”

As for the bandits, a single kick was enough to completely break their morale. While dragging their battered bodies, they rush towards the side door that their buddies had earlier escaped through. There doesn’t appear to be anyone who can’t move, so I am slightly relieved.

While watching them push and shove for their lives in front of the narrow side door, I muse over whether I should capture them or not. Of course, capturing them and handing them over to the peacekeeping authorities that be would be the proper thing to do. If I liberally use all of the spells that I have on hand, I should be capable of doing so, but I have yet to find my spellbook. If I use up all the spells that I have charged, and I still can’t find the spellbook…… The sense of danger from just now is still all too fresh in my mind.

If they go and do bad things somewhere else, I would become partly to blame. I sigh at this thought, but at the moment, that is all my conscience is going to get out of me.

Either way, within a few minutes, all of the bandits have already disappeared from my sight.

“Fuu……”

I decide that a change in mood is in order.

“3 of you, please keep an eye on the fort’s perimeter and make sure that those

mountain bandits do not come back. 2 of you, please comb the tower for any dangers and, if you find any, deal with them appropriately. The last one, please come along with me as a bodyguard."

Having received my orders, the ogres scatter throughout the fort, with one of them staying behind.

"Ah—…… this hurts……"

Inside the courtyard that has gone quiet, I suppress my shoulder. The ice arrow has disappeared before I noticed, but now there is a deep, gaping hole in the top part of my shoulder. Probably a direct result of the ice arrow, the flesh around the wound is hard like frozen meat, so there isn't much bleeding.

…… I still haven't found my spellbook, but if I leave this be, it is definitely going to be a hindrance. Above all, it hurts and is uncomfortable.

I chant the level 9 spell [Complete Recovery]. This being the fourth time, I no longer feel any unease with using spells. As expected of a level 9 spell—the deep wound goes away without leaving a trace. However, with this, I am all out of recovery spells.

"..... Alright, shall we get going?"

I slap my own cheeks as if to dispel the worry in my mind.

After I have my bodyguard ogre break my handcuffs, it's time for some exploring.

D&B is a game with four well-defined basic professions of Warrior, Priest, Thief, and Wizard. In other words, all classes have clear strengths and weaknesses.

As illustrated by my disgraceful behavior earlier, Wizards are absolutely useless in close combat, no matter how high their level (well it's not to the degree where a level 36 would lose against a level 1 Warrior or a few goblins).

When fighting with spells, 1 round (10 seconds) is absolutely needed for chanting. During that time frame, the Wizard is basically vulnerable.

Recovery magic is the Priest's domain. To recover hitpoints, all Wizards have is the [Complete Recovery] that I just used.

Wizards do have some spells to open locks and disable traps, but those spells are a pale replacement for a Thief, who can repeatedly perform such acts with no limit.

Now that I've given it some deep thought, my profession is quite weak…… actually no, it's more that there are a lot of weak points. It really would be prudent to remain cautious every step I take.

Because of this, I was originally quite worried about how things would turn out, but by having the ogres made with [Create Ogre Platoon] stand in front, the search of the fort ended uneventfully. Turns out there were no traps, and all the doors with a lock were easily smashed open by the ogres. Then again, the ogres' main tasks were to look for any bandits who are still hiding and other dangerous objects, so there is a high chance that they overlooked something. Oh well, it's not like I plan to live here long term anyways.

The fort turns out to be truly simple in design, with only a main tower and a single residential building within elliptical walls. Of course, there are a few defensive towers along the wall, but that's it. I get the strong feeling that this place was built for practicality rather than anything else. The jail where I had been held in stands right next to the residence.

The main tower is divided into four floors. Speaking broadly, the underground floor is the storeroom, then the aboveground floors are, from the bottom up, hall, command room, then private quarters. The private quarters' most recent occupant was, of course, Jyagul. The interior decorations are more decent than expected, but what surprised me most is the mountain of gold coins, jewels, and items piled up on the floor. With that said, I recognize most of the stuff there as having come from my own sling bag, so I quickly enlist the help of my ogre bodyguard and retrieve it all.

Most importantly, finding my spellbook lying on the floor filled me with relief to the bottom of my heart. With this, the breadth of what I can do has gone up by leaps and bounds.

I also find a large number of books and scrolls that must have belonged to Jyagul. I put them away for later reading—even the smallest bit of information that I can gather on this world would be of great help.

After finding my robe and boots and putting them on, I finally start to feel like myself. Incidentally, my Wizardry Staff has been turned to stone along with Jyagul, so I'm going to have to retrieve that later on. Of course, the Jyagul statue is still where I'd left it.

In addition, when I look around through the windows in the private quarters, I finally realize that this fort was built on the side of a really steep mountain. The surroundings are all forest, but there is a narrow mountain trail stretching from the fort gates, so it stands to reason that following that trail would eventually lead me to a human settlement.

As I sweep my gaze once more over the entire courtyard, my eyes fall on the jail constructed beside the residential building, and an important matter comes to mind.

“Ah, I forgot to save that person.”

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 6

Chapter 6: With the Iron Bars in Between

“Dear, oh dear.”

It really, really doesn’t do to treat all this like a game.

The girl in similar circumstances to mine that I would normally have saved first thing ended up being left forgotten up to now. I think the sun’s already about to set.

Throwing on the robe, boots, and sling bag that I had retrieved from Jyagul’s room, I run towards the jail. With ragged breath, I arrive in front of her jail cell and call out to her.

“Excuse me, are you alright?”

“IYAAAAHHHHH!”

The girl screams at the top of her lungs.

“Eh? No, it’s fine. I’m not a suspicious person at all!”

“Nooo don’t come near me! You monster!”

“Nn?”

Her words, as well as line of vision, seems to be going through me and aiming towards my back. While turning around, I finally understand. Fearfully, I lay eyes on……

“Guruo?”

♥♦♣♠

“..... Ummm, I’m really, really sorry about that. Can you please believe me? I am not an ally of the bandits nor the anki, and I have no intention whatsoever to harm you.”

“.....”

I am frantically trying to talk to the girl, who has retreated as far into the jail cell and shrunk her body as much as she can.

It was a complete mistake on my part, letting her see my bodyguard ogre standing behind me. Of course, I’ve already chased him away, but now she is on maximum wariness against me.

Now that I’m looking at her properly, I notice that rather than a girl, she’s more of a young girl. It’s really hard to tell the age of Caucasians based on their faces, but I’m guessing mid-teens? She has short chestnut-colored hair and looks like an active person, but currently she is pretty much snarling at me.

“I’m not lying, that really was a follower that I had created with my spellcraft. There is absolutely zero danger.”

“..... Doesn’t the fact that you create anki mean that you are allies with them?”

As I had suspected, ‘anki’ is a concept unique to this world. The term most likely refers to ogres and the like, but judging from the bandits’ and this girl’s reactions, they are quite feared. Furthermore, based on Jyagul’s words, the [spellcraft] that I use seems to be distinctly different from the [magic] that he was talking about. His Ice Arrow or whatever not being negated by the [Invincible] barrier might very well have been due to this.

“As I’ve been saying, I’ve only just arrived from a country far, far away….. I am a wizard, and I use magic different from whatever is used around here……”

“..... I don’t believe you.”

“In the first place, if I’m an ally of the bandits, then I wouldn’t be thrown into a cell and be beaten, would I? You saw it too, didn’t you?”

“That’s……”

The situation being as chaotic as it is, I can understand her disbelief upon suddenly being told by a strange guy that she’s being saved. In the first place, it’s not like she’s completely ignoring my words, so it seems like there might be some headway if I persevere patiently. But……

There’s a big ‘but.’

Would it have been much easier to gain her trust if I’m not an uncle in his forties,

but rather the silver-haired handsome young man that Gio Margils had been on the character sheet? .....Wait no, I have his abilities, do I not? If I use [Charm], this conversation could go much smoother……

“DORYAHHH!”

“GYAH! What are you doing?!”

Disgust with myself bubbles up for having entertained a thought worthy of being considered an all-time low. Thus, I am banging my head against the iron bars with all my strength. Naturally, my efforts are rewarded with intense pain, but that’s irrelevant. [Charm] only works on single targets, but it is a spell that makes the target obey whatever I say. In other words, it makes a puppet out of the other person’s very heart. Controlling someone by manipulating their heart…… there is very little that can match this in selfishness and cruelty. The fact that this option even came up in my mind shows how pathetic I am. As I have to keep telling myself, this is not a game, but reality.

“Just because! She wouldn’t listen! To my words! I’m such a fool!!”

(T/N: Imo this just makes him sound off his rocker rather than convey his remorse lol.)
I understand from the fact that I am displaying such disgraceful behavior in front of a girl that I do not know that I am not in a right state of mind.

However, the wicked thought that had just crossed my mind is something that must be excised immediately. If not, I will become a despicable person who drowns in his own power and wrecks havoc on the lives of others for the sake of his own desires—the fear of this is what is currently moving me.

“Wait a-, really please stop doing that! You are bleeding, there’s blood!!”

“Hahh…… hahh…… y-, yes you’re right…… uguh!”

Obviously, on top of my forehead splitting open, the fresh blood spurting out got into my eyes, and I almost faint in agony.

“Mou! What are you doing, really!”

“No, truly, I’m very sorry…… eh?”

I am about to wipe my blood-covered face with the sleeve of my robe, but my uplifted hand is wrapped in some soft cloth—a handkerchief.

“Please suppress the wound with this.”

As I reflexively bring the handkerchief to my forehead while raising my face, I see that the young girl has come right next to the iron bars. She must have handed me the handkerchief by reaching through.

“Th-, thank you…… uu……”

Completely forgetting about the potions in my sling bag, I say my thanks and sink to the floor.

“.....”

“.....”

Her face is scrunched up in a scowl as she looks down on me. Her lips are making a perfect ∧ character. Exasperated though she might be, this actually helped to thin the fear that she had been holding. At the very least, she is not mad at me.

This is a chance.

“I’m sorry for showing you something so unsightly.”

“Y-, yea, well……”

“I won’t tell you to believe me. But in exchange, would you be willing to listen to my story?”

“Unnn……”

The young girl crosses her arms, thinks hard about it, then plops herself down on the other side of the iron bars.

“Alright. Lemme hear it.”

♥♦♣♠

The young girl’s facial expression is still a bit stiff, but it seems that she’s at least feeling like lending me an ear. She is quietly waiting for me to start. While wiping my forehead with the borrowed handkerchief, I also somehow end up sitting in seiza. Ah, which reminds me.

“Umm, thank you for this handkerchief. I’ll wash it before returning it to you.”

“Oh, um, no need……”

“Before I start talking, please excuse me for a bit.”

I stick my hand into the sling bag left at my side and take out a brass bottle. It also comes with a cup attached on a chain.

“? Alcohol……?”

“No it is not. This is something called a ‘healing potion,’ and is for treating wounds.”

To be more specific, this is a truly convenient magic item called a Potion Server that can store enough potion for 10 uses.

“Then you should probably drink that quickly, right?”

“?”

Ah, she’s talking about the wound on my forehead. Completely slipped my mind.

“Actually no, I was thinking that you would need it. Are you injured anywhere?”

“I……”

The young girl hesitates. Based on her facial expression though, it seems like she is hurting somewhere…….

“Ahh, of course, this is not poison. Alright, I’ll drink it first to show you.”

I pour a light pink liquid with a sweet fragrance into the cup, then drink it all in one go. It tastes like a really sweet kind of sake, but…… I really do feel my strength being recovered.

“Ohh…… it got healed.”

The cut on my forehead immediately closes up. It's a bit too late to be saying this, but this is so fiction-y……

"Well then, no need to be reserved."

Once again, I pour healing potion into the cup, then I offer it to the young girl.

"But something so expensive…… I merely sprained my ankle a little bit……"

"This is my apology for having given you a fright. Please, do not be reserved."

"....."

She still looks unsure. Rather than out of doubt in me, it appears that she really is being hesitant because of financial considerations.

"Also, when I escort you home after this, it would be troublesome if your foot still hurts on the journey, right? ……And on the off chance that you don't want my help, then this would be all the more true."

"Tha-, that's true…… Alright then…… Umm, I'll definitely pay you back at a later time."

While still holding onto an unflagging sense of duty, she finally accepts the cup and drinks the potion.

".....fuu."

The sharpness in her face gradually drains away.

“Ah, it doesn’t hurt at all!”

It seems that the pain has gone, as she joyfully stretches out the legs that she had been covering up. The hem of her onepiece flutters, revealing glimpses of her healthy-looking thighs……. This might not mean much coming from an adult at my age, but I think that girls that age shouldn't show their thighs so easily.

“?!..... wawawa?! I’m sorry, I got a bit carried away.”

When I courteously turn my eyes away, the young girl goes red and presses the hem down. What a cute gesture.

“It appears that it worked. That’s a relief.”

“Eh, ah, thank you very much. Umm, I’m sorry for saying such hurtful things earlier.”

“Will you believe me now?”

“F-, for the moment, I’ll at least believe that you’ve come to help me.”

That’s enough.

But still, this is a relief. Back in Japan, even complete strangers could quickly build up a certain rapport as long as both held common sense. The reason is because the assumption that both parties live in the same society and follow the same rules stands. In a parallel world where such an assumption cannot be guaranteed, having successfully communicated with another human being (may I count Jyagul and his gang as outliers?) gives me relief.

“So, before anything else, can you let me out of here? Do you have the key?”

“Ah, you’re right. Please give me a second.”

It is still too early to be relieved. Having come this far, my first goal is to safely escort this child home. I stand up, and send the Inner World me down to the 2nd floor.

“By means of this spell, the lock that I am touching shall lock or unlock by my will. [Wizard Lock].”

As described in the chant, this is a very useful spell that can be used to unlock or lock something. When I finish the chant, the lock easily comes off with a click.

“Wah, that’s amazing.”

With her eyes opened wide, the young girl passes through the bars. After straightening her back, she abruptly lowers her head.

“Daughter of the commercial merchant Ild from the city of Lelis, my name is Mora. Please pardon me for my various discourtesies. I hope for a mutually beneficial relationship from here on.”

It was such a refreshing greeting that it made me wish the new employees from my company could take a page or two from her.

“I am the wizard Gio Margils. I share your sentiments exactly.”

♥♦♣♠

Right after stepping out of the jail, I instruct the ogres to watch the fort gates and our surroundings, but Mora got mad at me for that. “Other people would think that we’re allied with the anki, you know!? We might get targeted by the

war tribes, you know!?” is what she said. Another word unfamiliar to me came up, but this part is where I should just obediently follow her advice.

“By means of this spell, may all magical power within a 3m radius be reduced to nothing. [Dispel Magic].”

As it is an absolute necessity in anti-wizardry warfare, I always have three copies of this charged up. When I use one of them to undo the effects of [Create Ogre Platoon], the 6 ogres waver like mirages before vanishing.

“So you really did make those anki with your magic……”

“Those were ogres. And not magic, but spellcraft……”

In any event, there are too many things that I really must confirm.

After making sure that the main gate’s side door is firmly locked, we go into the main tower, which looks like a good place to sit down and have a proper talk. Along the way, Mora notices Jyagul lying about in the courtyard. Well, it’s not exactly an objet d’art meant to instill peace in those who see it.

“Umm…… this is……?”

“A magician who I think was the boss of the bandits here.”

“But this is a stone statue.”

“I turned him into a statue with a spell.”

“..... Heehh~.....”

Mora moves a step away while continuing to walk with me.

…

Thankfully, she didn’t run away.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 7

“Gochisousama deshita. It was delicious.”

“Really? I’m glad to hear it.”

The sun has set, and the fireplace is both warming and illuminating the room.

Mora and I are in the parlor of the main tower.

After realizing that we were both hungry, eating became our first priority.

Fortunately for us, the bandits had stockpiled a lot of foodstuffs, so we, erm, borrowed some.

Cooking dried meats and cheese over a fire, slicing bread, and boiling bean soup was, of course, all done by Mora. She finished everything so speedily that I didn't have time to do anything. Let’s make sure to help her out next time……

I was so hungry that I didn’t have the leisure of tasting anything, but I got the feeling that what I had been shoveling down my throat was quite delicious. Condiments are probably much scarcer in this world, but many of the ingredients

were so natural and fresh that I ate enough to surprise myself. The bread was hard and black though.

♥♦♣♠

"Well then, let's try this again….."

"Ah, yes."

The conversation starts with me explaining my circumstances first. There are mountains of things about this world that I want to ask Mora, but I probably need to gain a bit more trust from her before that.

"I am from a country called Jiiteias that is so far away that it is probably beyond even one or two oceans."

"Al……. right…… "

Jiiteias is a country from the D&B campaign, and is actually the character Gio Margils' birthplace. That's why what I said was not a complete lie.

"As for the reason why I've come, even I am not sure. I think that most likely, I got caught up in some wizardry accident—ah, it might make more sense to you if I call it a magical accident. Due to that accident, I was blown all the way here, and while I was still unconscious, the mountain bandits captured me. At least, that is what I think happened."

"I see……"

Mora is listening properly, but her face makes it obvious that she is not convinced. To her credit, even I think that my story sounds suspicious……

“Which is why in the eyes of people from around here—is this a country?—I might be a bit strange. However, I swear that I don’t intend people any harm, and that I’m not someone like Jyagul. That, at least, I really wish for you to believe.”

I then bow my head deeply towards Mora, to which she responds:

“..... Very well, I’ll believe you.”

“Thank you very much.”

“..... To be honest, half of it went completely over my head, you know? However, I really do think that you’re not an evil magician.”

“At this point in time, that is enough for me.”

I pat down my chest with relief. For now, let’s stick with this story while explaining to other humans.

“You’re really strange, Gio-san. You’re a magician, and even have a family name, but you’re still so kind to someone like me.”

“Back in my country, it is only natural to be kind to girls. Being a magician and having a family does not make someone great either……”

“At least in the city of Lelis where I live, only noble-samas have family names, and those who manage to become magicians are either noble-samas or, even if they

are commoners, come from quite well-to-do families.”

As suspected, this is a medieval-like world. Social stratification appears to be alive and well.

“That sounds so different from my country…… Ah, this is also quite delicious.”

I take another sip of the tea that Mora had brewed—it is apparently called shil tea—and sigh appreciatively. It has a refreshingly bitter taste.

“Now, may I hear the circumstances behind how Mora-san was captured?”

Mora nods in response to my question, twisting her mouth once again into a へ shape.

Mora is the daughter of a commercial merchant based in Lelis city.

Lelis is a city state beside a gigantic lake called Lake Liuus that belongs to the Liuus Union, an alliance of small countries.

Mora’s father is someone who’s already built up a relatively large fortune, but he still frequently travels along with his caravans. Mora, too, often goes along to help her father.

While travelling over one of their usual highways, their caravan was attacked by mountain bandits. This happened yesterday morning.

Actually, this was not their first time coming across bandits. Rather, they meet some pretty much one out of every three trips they make. But usually, the bandits only demand a third of the merchant’s cargo and commodities as a ‘passage fee.’ A third sounds like a very big loss, but even on safer roads, the tax

levied by the local lords is about the same anyways, so the balance sheet ends up looking similar either way. Mora's father just logs it all under 'necessary expenses.'

This time, however, the bandits demanded all of the cargo and money that he had on him. Of course, there were guards travelling with the caravan, but their numbers were chosen with the assumption that the bandits would not be a problem, so they couldn't put up any resistance at all. Furthermore, the bandits also kidnapped Mora, demanding 5,000 gold coins from her father as ransom money.

"After that, the bandits brought you to this fort?"

"Yes…… This is the first time that things had gone this far……"

Apparently, the mountain bandits who've been demanding passage fee up til now are the exact ones who've been staying at this fort. So the question is, why did these (relatively) moderate bandits change their policy all of a sudden?

Oh, I can just dispel Jyagul's petrification and ask him directly. But to be honest, I'm quite reluctant to do so.

According to Mora's memory, I was thrown into my jail cell several hours before I awoke. When seen in that perspective, the timing was quite fortunate in regards to saving Mora.

"By now, I think that my father must have already arrived at the nearby village. Then, he'll either be requesting the knights to rescue me, or preparing the ransom……"

"I see…… In that case, let us make haste tomorrow morning to reach this village as soon as we can."

“Yes, please let’s do so.”

♥♦♣♠

“Seriously, what a crazy day it’s been.”

We’ve split up, me to the 2nd floor and Mora to the 3rd.

(T/N: Command room — him; private quarters — her. British counting, apparently.)

The moon that I can see from my windows looks the same as the one in my own world.

I finally have time to relax, but my mind is so full of thoughts. Due to the unfamiliar environment and actions that I am not accustomed to, I feel fatigue gathering all the way to the bottom of my heart.

What should I do if the mountain bandits come back? What method should I use to bring Mora home? And also, how am I going to make a living from here on?

Fortunately, the night is still young. Let’s take our time thinking through it all while drinking shil tea……

♥♦♣♠

“Goodness! What time do you plan to sleep until!”

“..... Hah?!”

The next morning came before I knew it.

I was slumped over the table in the command room when Mora came in to wake me up.

I had apparently nodded off while thinking about various things. Which means that I was completely defenseless for all of last night. I really need to be more careful.

“Breakfast is already done! Let’s eat it quickly and set off!”

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“Come on, I’ve already even prepared bentos for us, so let’s get going!”

Now that breakfast is over, Mora is pressing me to depart, with her face full of motivation. That’s fine and all, but……

“What is with all that luggage?”

The girl in a one-piece is shouldering an enormous jute bag filled to bursting. I can only see her as someone either looting or fleeing from a fire scene.

“This is Dad’s property that the bandits had seized. All of the luggage would be impossible for me, but I thought to grab as much as I can……”

Indeed, this place was the mountain bandits’ base, so if I spent some time searching, I would most likely be able to find the treasures of the various people that they’ve attacked. During yesterday’s search, I think I saw something like that down in the storeroom. If this was D&B, I would have just gladly taken it all. Wait, so if I had taken everything yesterday, I would have inadvertently also taken Mora’s family’s property…… what a close shave.

“Ah, please wait a bit. I have preparations to make.”

After calming down the Mora who looks ready to bolt off at a moment's notice, I chant a few spells.

"H-, Horse?!"

By means of the level 3 spell [Phantom Horse], a black horse appears in the courtyard of the fort, causing Mora to raise a hysteric voice. This horse that is covered by a faint green aura is, depending on the caster's level, capable of displaying various abilities for traversing different terrain types. Of course, since I am max level, my horse is not only capable of running on water, but can also fly, rendering all walls meaningless to its rider.

"It would be quite tough walking on a mountain trail for a whole half day, and it's also better to reach the village as soon as possible, so let's use this horse. As for the luggage, I also have this……"

My gaze turns to the Jyagul statue that had been left abandoned the entire night. I then chant the spell that had come to mind during breakfast.

"Wha-, it's floating! That too……!"

[Sprite Porter]. This is a spell that creates an invisible follower who carries luggage. Being a level 1 spell, the porter has no other ability than to shoulder luggage and follow behind its caster, but its strength is quite significant. First Mora's luggage, then the Jyagul statue—both were lifted handily. Then again, this follower is invisible, so it just looks like the jute bag and statue are floating together in midair. Quite surreal. Mora seems to be of a similar opinion, muttering "uwah…… " and stuff.

Originally, I was quite troubled as to what to do with the Jyagul statue. I currently do not have the time to return him to flesh to question him, but

neither can I just leave him be, not when he's got my Wizardry Staff. In the end, I decided to bring him along. Just in case, if I get called an evil magician from here on, I can also use him as an eyewitness.

"There are a few other spells that I want to use as precautions, but let's set off first."

"O-, okay……"

I mount the phantom horse, then pull Mora up behind me. What I grasped is not a 'white and slender hand' like the ones often described in novels, but a warm hand hardened by daily chores and work.

"Umm…… haiyah!"

"……?"

The last time I'd ridden a horse was several decades ago, when I was at a farm in Hokkaido just trying it out as an experience. However, I am able to properly handle the reins. It is most likely thanks to The Guardian faithfully realizing D&B's basic rulebook, in which it was written that all characters possess basic horseriding technique. Then again, it's a monster that I've called up, so it'll move according to my orders without me needing any special techniques.

Mora timidly settles herself crossways behind the saddle.

I instruct the phantom horse to start walking (the statue and jute bag bobbing in mid air behind really look so strange). We pass through the side door in the gate and exit the fort.

The front yard is extremely narrow. One side is a cliff, while the other is a

precipitous slope. Any army intending to attack this place would most likely have a really hard time. In the first place, I'm impressed how they even managed to construct a fort made of stone all the way up here……

"Let's hurry to the village to show Dad that I'm fine, then let's come back. I'm worried about the cargo."

So said Mora with a serious face.

"Good point, since the mountain bandits might come back. Alright, let's put up a countermeasure then."

"Countermeasure?"

While looking up at the fort's tall stone walls from atop my horse, I invoke my next spell.

"..... [Renovation]."

"?! What is it this time?!"

From the ground—more specifically, the ground beneath the fort—come tremors and rumblings.

"T-, the fort is……?! The ground is……?!"

This spell allows me to freely alter the surface of the earth. Along with a 'GOGOGO' sound, the land that the fort is built upon rises vertically. After lifting the fort by 20 meters or so, the effects of the spell abate. What we are now looking at is a 90 degree precipice.

“With this, I don’t think anyone will be going inside for a while.”

“.....”

Vanity assaults me as I look at Mora, who is staring at the fort on top of a precipice with mouth and eyes wide open. Goodness, what a worldly-minded person I am.

I shake my head lightly, then get to casting a few other urgently needed spells.

“I’m sorry for having made you wait. Alright, we’ll be departing now.”

“..... Ah, yes.”

I try to act cool and kick the horse’s flank, but instead of that signal, it is my mental command that prompts the horse to step off…… into the air.

“Ohhhhh, it's actually flying!”

“GYAAAAHHHH?!”

♥♦♣♠

“..... eurgh……”

“Seriously, it’s going to be troublesome if you don’t think things through, alright? I don’t know anything about your magic—wizardry, you call it?—alright? What were you going to do if we had fallen off!”

“..... You are right…… I'm very sorry…... “

Several minutes later, the phantom horse that we are riding is quietly proceeding down the mountain trail.

It was well and all being excited about my first experience of riding a horse through the sky, but problems emerged almost at once. The first is that Mora started panicking. The second is that I got sick. Furthermore, we realized that we might miss her dad if he's on his way to pay the ransom. The third might have been a non-issue if the way was flat, but it's not, so that's that.

Fortunately, the swaying is not so bad when we are on land.

Despite the unfavorable conditions of a dense and luxuriant forest, we are still making good headway in relative comfort. The scolding from Mora behind me isn't showing signs of ending any time soon, though.

Anyways, according to Mora, going down this mountain trail for half a day will eventually bring us to a highway. Going west along the highway will bring us to Lelis, while going east will bring us to the village (its name is Yuule, apparently).

We swayed on the phantom horse's back for about 2 hours.

"..... It seems that Gio-san really is different from the other magicians."

"Is that so?"

While I was thinking that it is about time to find a place to stop and eat our bentos, Mora speaks up with a sigh.

"Has Mora-san seen the magicians around here, or seen magic being used?"

“There’s a Magician Guild in Lelis, after all. Also, due to my father’s job nature, I’ve met and travelled with magicians who are adventurers.”

So there really is a Magician Guild. And adventurers too.

“But it’s just that the magic used by magicians is all only for fighting, like shooting balls of fire or arrows of ice, or blowing people away with wind.”

“Interesting……”

So offensive magic is well-developed, but magic for the sake of convenience, such as summoning, is not often used.

“Also, a lot of them really look down on commoners……”

“That sounds really tough.”

While conversing in this manner, something became visible beyond the mountain trail.

“Nn? Isn’t that a person?”

“..... Ah, you’re right.”

The twisty road makes it really hard to see, but several tens of meters along this road, there is what seems to be a single person sitting all alone. A new encounter! This time, let’s be careful to not get suspected or accused of anything strange from the start.

To appear less threatening, I slow the phantom horse’s pace as we draw closer,

upon which I begin to make out that it is a man with a bow on his back who is wearing easy-to-move-in clothes that use green and brown as base colors.

“Greetings, good morning.”

After getting more than close enough for him to have noticed us, I call out to him.

“Ah, good morning. Out for a ride?”

The man raises one hand good-naturedly in reply. I think he’s roughly in his 30’s? He’s wearing a mantle with a leather hood, and what looks to be leather equipment. If I had to give him a label based on ingame professions, then it’d be either Ranger or Hunter.

“No, we were in a bit of a complicated situation. I’m currently trying to escort this lady here to Yuule Village……”

As I start to explain, Mora pokes her head out from hehind me and then shouts.

“Ah, it’s Sedam-san!”

“..... Mora?”

Mora flies down from the phantom horse’s saddle, then dashes over to the man that she had just called ‘Sedam.’

“Sedam-san! Did you come to save me?!”

“Well yea, it was a request from your father.”

Ohh, which means this man is an adventurer. After encounters with mountain bandits and an evil magician, now it's a fantasy profession.

I also dismount from the phantom horse and walk towards him.

"Pleased to meet you. I am a wizard by the name of Gio Margils. Due to some stroke of luck, I was able to save Mora-san."

"..... Wizard? Well, either way, it is clear that you did save Mora. Thank you."

I was afraid that the adventurers who'd taken up the request to save Mora would say that I'd gotten in their way, but Sedam is smiling while sticking one hand out. I can take this posture as an invitation to a handshake, right?

While still thinking about it, I also stretch out one hand, which Sedam immediately grasps tightly.

"The mountain bandits have apparently gotten a new magician boss, and gotten full of themselves. I'm surprised you managed to save her."

"It was only because of the overlap of various coincidences. Anyways, things went well. There's not a single scratch on her."

"I would very much like to hear the story in greater detail at a later time. But for now….."

He releases the handshake, then brings his fingers to his mouth and makes a shrill, high-pitched sound.

Immediately, there is the sound of something heavy falling behind me.

“?!”

“Not an enemy…… it seems. Not that I care either way though, as long as Mora's safe.”

I turn around to find out that there is now suddenly a woman wearing leather armor standing behind me. She is a beauty with red hair done up in braids, but her facial expression is dark. A ‘kasha~n’ noise causes me to look downwards, just in time to see her short sword being returned to its scabbard. Was she hiding the entire time up in the tree? She is definitely a Thief or an Assassin.

“Fijika-san! This person may seem very suspicious, but he’s really not a bad person!”

Mora is hugging the woman that she called ‘Fijika’ while trying to back me up. What with her conversation with Sedam, it seems like she is quite close with these people.

At that, two more adventurers emerge from a thicket beside the mountain trail.

“But like this, we won’t get any reward.”

“Well, this is fine too~”

It is a lady holding a long staff and a young man equipped with a shield and a sword.

“Sorry about that. From our scouting, we already knew that you were coming. Just in case you were the rumored magician, we took some precautions.”

Sedam smiles wryly.

I see, that was smart thinking. Hmmm more like, I had let my guard down. I thought I had made preparations, but if I was ambushed in my current un-[Invincible] state, I might not have been able to fend it off. My sense of danger is still lacking.

“There are 2 more lying in wait up ahead. How about let’s meet up with them and exchange information over lunch?” (Sedam)
“Won’t the bandits come to grab her back?” (Party Member)

“It doesn’t feel like that kind of atmosphere, but…… are they chasing you?” (Sedam)
“No, they are not. At the very least, the bandits who were in the fort have all been scattered, and we’ve captured their boss, the magician.” (Gio)
“I think it should be fine! Let’s eat!” (Mora)

“See?” (Sedam)

And this is how I met Sedam and his party, with whom I will be associating with for a very, very long time.

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Chapter 9: Anki

I had Mora mount the phantom horse while I walk with the reins in my hands.

According to Sedam, the remaining two adventurers are only a short walk away.

The leader of the party is Sedam, who is a Ranger.

The one who flew down from a tree is Fijika, a Scout. The Magician is Claura, and the Warrior is Ted. Lying in wait are Torad, a Monk, and Jiruk, another Warrior.

(T/N: Direct translation of Torad's profession is actually Warrior Priest, but everyone knows that's what the Monk class is. Having Warrior and Warrior Priest together just makes things confusing.)

They belong to the Lelis Adventurer Guild (the Adventurer Guild really exists), and had apparently accepted a request posted by Mora's father, Irudo. Furthermore, they already have a standing relationship with him, as he is the person who helps maintain all their dwarven-made tools and equipment (and yep, looks like dwarves exist too).

From the conversation over lunch, I learn that Irudo had moved straight to gathering adventurers upon arriving at Yuule. Normally, there are no notably strong parties in Yuule, but Sedam and his party just happened to be staying there for another job, so they stepped forward.

“Is it not possible to rely on the poli-..... town guards, knights, or the country’s soldiers?”

The reply to my naive question was “He purposely chose not to.” Yuule is indeed the territory of a certain knight order, but if the order hears of this incident, they would have to prioritize the extermination of the bandits over the safe extraction of Mora.

“So the policy is zero negotiation with terrorists, huh.”

“? After all, their number one task is to maintain the overall public order.”

So replied Sedam in a weary tone. Not that it’s a problem, but this guy seems pretty intellectual, despite being a Ranger. He has the vibe of a university professor that would show up in one of those Western natural science documentaries.

“Ironically, if they had remained satisfied with the old policy of only taking ⅓, all would have been well. Ah, ojou-chan, give me more tea.” (Jiruk)

“Here you go~”

Jiruk, who Mora is currently waiting on, appears to be the oldest in this party. That said though, he’s around my age.

By the way, Mora is currently running around smearing mustard on everyone’s

bread and refilling everyone's teacups, all without having been asked. Back in Japan, I had almost no chances at all to be in contact with teenage girls, so I feel a tiny bit uncomfortable with this. But if I had a daughter, I would really like for her to be as good a child as Mora is……

"So, our circumstances are as such. May we hear yours now?"

Sedam then turns the conversation to me. Even though I am about 10 years older than him, he is giving off enough pressure to make it clear that he won't allow me to sidestep the question. The number of battlefields that he and I have survived are just that different in number, I suppose.

"Ah, sure. Umm……"

I quickly swallow one of Mora's sandwiches before beginning.

♥♦♣♠

"..... and well, yea, that's about it."

"....."

I gave the same story that I had given Mora. The adventurers' reactions are exactly as I had expected. They all have a 'this sounds suspicious' face on.

"In the first place, a magician who doesn't have magical power can't exist!"

The magician Claura looks like she can't hold herself back anymore. In contrast to my robe, she is wearing tight-fitting pants, a shirt, and a mantle. She had given her last name as Andel, so she might be from a noble family.

But still, no magical power? Jyagul also said the same thing, but what does it mean?

“I, too, want to ask about that. Do magicians from around here—I mean, in Sedia—possibly see magical power with the naked eye?”

I remember The Guardian calling this world Sedia Continent. There is actually a spell that enables me to also see magical power, but this was not a requirement for using spells in D&B.

“Of course we can! In the first place, you are not even holding a staff!!”

“Ngu…… But that statue and jute bag floating in midair, what can it be if not magic?”

So asked Torad the monk in a laidback tone while gnawing on a piece of dried meat. He has on crude armor, shield, and mace, but he is a young man with a calm, gentle demeanor.

“..... That’s……”

“Wait, a moment.”

Claura was on the verge of giving some counterargument, but was interrupted by a low voice.

“Presence of…… anki.”

Fijika, who is in charge of scouting on our return journey, suddenly drops that as if it’s the most trivial piece of information in the world.

♥♦♣♠

“There are fricking swarms of them.”

“Small demons, large demons, and even rock demons……”

(T/N: In case you forgot, anki means ‘shadow demons,’ and is the generic term for all demons in this series).

We have left the mountain road and cut through the forest to where we can get a proper view.

Being able to see a blue sky all the way to the horizon feels very good. Plains stretch from the foot of the mountain, bisected by a meandering line that seems to be a highway. The problem, however, is the ominous army of anki marching through a valley only 20 meters below where we are. We are hiding behind trees and boulders while surveying the valley.

The most numerous are small demons. Games similar to D&B would probably call them goblins. Small build, short horns, large ears. They seem to be following commands from the large demons. These really do look very similar to the ogres that I can create with a spell. But most conspicuous of all is the rock demon, which is swaying along with a body as large as an elephant. It has short, fat legs, a potbelly, long arms, and fangs attached to a pig-like snout. Yep, definitely a troll. Thankfully, there is only one rock demon within view. However, that single one is shouldering a club gigantic enough to bury the entire valley, made of what appears to be a whole bundle of logs.

It is not possible to see all of the demons, as they are marching through the forest, but the total number most likely reaches the hundreds.

“For being goblins and orcs and trolls, their levels sure can’t be sneezed at……”

I am studying them with my Telescope Lens, a magic item from my sling bag that, as its name implies, functions as a telescope. Just from looking, I already feel a cold sweat breaking out all over me.

These are indeed anki [shadow demons]. Their forms can described with terms like ‘goblin’ and ‘ogre,’ but the age-old association between these descriptors and the concept of ‘trash mobs’ does not fit them at all. Their entire bodies are as black as if they’ve been painted over with tar. Eyes glittering with the intent to murder. Even through the lens, I can feel so much hatred, as if the complete extinction of humankind is the only thing in their minds. Now I finally understand Mora and the mountain bandits’ fear. Rather than living creatures, these are much closer to being demonic beasts or undead.

The reason why the word ‘army’ was used instead of ‘group’ is because they are marching in so orderly a fashion that it is clear they are following some form of discipline.

In the center of the formation is a large demon who is clearly the commander, sitting on a pedestal that is being carried by several small demons.

“..... If they continue down that valley, they will eventually come out of the forest. They definitely intend to attack Yuule.”

So muttered Jiruk, causing Mora to scream with a soft “hii.”

“From our current position, we can reach the village first and give them warning.”

“Even if we succeed, there still won’t be enough time to conduct the evacuation. Wouldn’t it be better to go to the White Sword Castle and call for reinforcements?”

Sedam and Torad are discussing what to do, but evacuation or reinforcement—would either of these be effective against so large an army?

“Then we’ll split into two groups after coming out of the forest. Let’s hurry.”

“..... Ah.”

Is it fine if I do nothing?

In the bandits’ fort, remembering the words «What will you do next?» is what caused me to take action. But that’s like brushing off sparks that just happened to fall on me. This situation, in contrast, would be a conscious, uncoerced decision.

To be honest, “can it be done?” is a moot question for me. It may be a bit presumptuous of me, but the question that I’m wrestling with is “is it actually fine to do it?”. In other words, whether it is permissible for me to annihilate this army of anki.

I have plenty of concerns.

But at the root of them all is the fact that I don’t understand what The Guardian’s expectations are. If I defeat the anki here, would it become the trigger for another event in the future, one that might be even more terrible?

Or perhaps, like those dark fantasy stories, it turns out that the anki are the true, rightful residents of this world?

There is a high likelihood that defeating the anki here will cause a very sudden change in my own standing. I might get treated as a hero (which I don’t think

likely, and wouldn't be able to bear), or people might turn against me (which would be undesirable in obvious ways). "You were using forbidden arts" is a trope or flag or something, right?

In the first place, there is no proof that they are on their way to attack Yuule. As fellow sentient beings (yes, I might be reaching), wouldn't aiming for mutual understanding be a better option?

…… And well, those are the rational opinions running around inside me.

I am feeling both fear and anxiety towards the unknown future. The fact that this is no longer a game has been impressed upon me several times already.

Indeed, I am not my character in D&B, the great wizard Gio Margils who has saved the entire world again and again. I am a human who has comfortably lived out all 42 years of his life in a peaceful country where talking things over is far more respected than any and all forms of violence.

For such a person to make such a decision, a reason is necessary.

"Umm, how many casualties?"

"Nn?"

"If the anki assault the village in its current state, how many casualties would there be?"

Hearing my question, Ted answers me with exasperation.

"Those numbers, AND a rock demon?! Everyone will die. Absolutely everyone."

“Such a thing……”

Mora looks at Sedam and the other adventurers as if to ask for help, but no one meets her eyes.

“V-, Very well. I understand.”

My voice is turned inside out with nervousness.

“Gio-san……”

Mora calls me with anxiety in her voice. Feeling my clothes being pulled, I look down to see that she is tightly gripping the hem of my robe.

“Don’t worry, I’ll do something about it.”

For just a moment, I had the presumptuousness of thinking of Mora as my daughter.

In that case, then now’s the time. No matter how much I might regret this later on, now I must do my job as an adult.

Be it hero or sinner, or whatever else I might be called.

♥♦♣♠

“..... Sorry, my stomach hurts, so I’m going back first!”

I shake off Mora’s hand, and return the way we’d come from. Let’s at least chant the spell from somewhere out of her sight.

…… Well, limiting the risks that can be limited is also part of being an adult.

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Chapter 10: The Strongest Attack Spell

Thinking about it afterwards, there was no need to be that worked up.

“Please go ahead first. It is going to be dangerous, so please put as much distance between yourselves and the valley as possible. Mora-san, the phantom horse is yours to use!”

I am shouting over my shoulder at the adventurers and Mora, who are looking at me with surprise—or is that suspicion?—as I run off. I've already instructed the phantom horse to acknowledge Mora as its rider. This is all I can do for them. After running back up the mountain road for about 100 meters at my top speed, I peek down at the valley through the trees. The back figures of the marching anki army is gradually getting farther away. Turning around, I confirm that I’m also out of sight of Mora and the rest.

(T/N: I don’t think 100m is as far as the author is making it sound lol.)

“Alright.”

I slap both cheeks with my hands to psyche myself up. I turn my attention to the

invisible force field currently enveloping me. It is the effect of one of the spells that I had chanted as a precaution after exiting the fort.

“Uuu……”

Supported by the force field, my body gently floats up. My mood turns dark after recalling the ‘flying sickness’ from earlier, but this is no time to be paying that any mind.

I am rising towards the sky, thanks to the [Fly] spell.

“So scary……”

It is the first time in my life flying through the sky by myself, and it is even scarier than riding the phantom horse. The force field surrounding me is protecting me from wind and air pressure and the like, but to think that it would be this unnerving to not feel anything under my feet……

“Alright, let’s just get going……”

I fearfully fly off in pursuit of the anki army.

[Fly] can output a maximum speed of 50kmph. Along the way, I take a detour to where I think Mora and the rest would be, but it only took a few minutes to catch up to the head of the anki army.

(T/N: I, too, fail to see the link between the two clauses here, but it’s what was written.)

“By means of this spell, may there be a firm wall of stone below me of thickness 15cm, width 15m, and height 5m. [Wall of Stone].”

Because of the spell, an enormous stone wall materializes in the valley. Its size has been tailored for this narrow part of the valley, so it perfectly stops the entire anki army.

I lower myself down to land on top of this wall.

Why I am going to all this trouble is because I want to see the anki closer up before I go about wiping them out. The effects of the spell that I have in mind will be the same regardless of the distance, but it's just that I still have some reservations about massacring such a large number of living creatures. It's not so good for appearances, and there might be the 1 in a million chance that I can actually talk with them.

"..... u..... "

A stone wall had suddenly appeared in front while they were marching. Naturally, all of them are showing signs of being unnerved. However, that only lasts an instant. The moment they see me, a human, on top of the wall, anki numerous enough to bury the valley floor raises piercing shrieks.

"KISHAAAAA!"

"GYAGYAGYAGYAGYA!"

"GURUOOO! GUGAHHHH!!"

Both small demons and large demons alike spray spittle from their mouths while gnashing their teeth. I can hear the 'gachigachi' sound all the way up here. The eyes that they are glaring at me with are eloquently expressing their thoughts of "We can't help but to hate you hate you hate you hate you fucking hate you."

“..... This, is hopeless indeed.”

Though belated, I now fully understand. Anki are humanity’s natural enemies. There is zero possibility for coexistence.

“Gugyah! Gyahh!”

Something is flying at me from the rear ranks. It is a rain of arrows, shot by small demon archers under commands from large demons. Their ability to follow orders with discipline despite being so crazed with hatred only makes them that much more frightening.

But all of the thick, black arrows change trajectory before reaching me and end up flying off towards aftermorrow. It is the effect of another spell that I had cast as precaution, [Protect from Missiles].

“GYARUUUU!”

“KISHAAAAAAAA!”

Seeing the ineffectiveness of arrows, the commander flourishes a hand. All the small demons that I can see immediately start a mad dash towards the stone wall.

Pushing and shoving, as if hoping to hack at me with their axes and swords even one second earlier, they begin to climb the wall by stepping on each other. I had set the wall to be 5m high, but it takes less than a minute for them to almost reach and overwhelm me.

But of course, I don’t have to play along with that.

“GyaUUuuu?!”

I simply fly upwards. Arrows and throwing axes follow, but they are of no consequence.

“..... W-Well then. In a way, this…… gives me relief, I suppose.”

Having come into contact with such fierce hostility and hatred, my mood is obviously in the pits. My throat is parched, and the cold sweat wouldn’t stop pouring out. However, gaining assurance on my actions—this suddenly makes everything feel easier.

The real me continues flying upward until reaching a height where I can see the entire valley, then hovers in place. On the other hand, inside my heart, the Inner World me passes through the Door of Wizardry, and descends the spiral staircase.

Despite having done this twice yesterday, the pressure on the 9th floor still manages to surprise me with its intensity. While suppressing my hurriedness, I enter [Spell Archive of the Great Wizard] and confirm the 7 books still lined up (I’ve already used 2 of the 9,and haven’t yet had the chance to re-charge any).

…… There it is.

To be frank, there aren’t a lot of pure attack spells in D&B.

The most common representative is the level 1 [Mana Bolt]. Then there are the level 3 [Fireball] and [Lightning], level 4 [Ice Storm], then the list jumps straight to [Meteor] at level 9. Now of course, there are spells to poison or paralyze or to cause to sleep, as well as spells to create tornadoes or monsters, so the variety of spells that can be used as an attack is high. It’s just the flashy spells that have

absolutely no other use than for attacking with that are limited in number. There are a few original ones invented by the me and the game master of the time, having been inspired by anime and manga, but there was an unwritten rule between us.

In short, the rule is that the strongest attack spell is——

“By means of this spell, may 8 falling stars be summoned and descend upon the head of mine enemy. [Meteor].”

The chanting of my real self and my Inner World self together releases the energy of the spell.

A breath later…… the blue sky is torn asunder by 8 lights.

The 8 lights, guided by my aiming, fall onto the anki army trapped within the crooked valley.

The rock demon and commander large demon, upon being struck by the light, both burst apart like balloons popped with a needle. The raging inferno caused by the crash of the meteor buries the entire valley floor, incinerating the anki to their very bones. Trapped by the cliffs, the shockwave has nowhere to go but up, slicing the burning bodies into thousands of pieces on its way. Without losing any momentum, the inferno and shockwave rushes over the valley like a tsunami before blowing into the air.

“Wh-, whoahhhh!?”

A wall of air batters me, causing my inner organs to shake. Although my body is protected by the [Fly] force field, it is still blown about like a leaf. The roar of explosion is so incredible that I can’t hear the screams and bellows of the dying anki.

“What the hell is this?!”

The footage of a nuclear experiment that I had once saw on TV comes to mind.

I confirm the effect of the spell while covering my face with both hands. I can’t see everything due to the flames and smoke, but I can confirm that the innumerable anki that had been there just now—small demons, large demons, rock demons, the whole lot of them—have all become reduced to pieces of flesh and charcoal.

Back during the game, I have indeed used [Meteor] to wipe out an entire citadel, but it is something else entirely to see it with my bare eyes……

♥♦♣♠

“Ah!”

Due to the shockwave from the explosion, the cliffs on either side of the valley are breaking off and falling down. Seeing that, I finally realize it.

“With such a explosion, Mora-san and the others……”

While cursing my own idiocy, I fly along the mountain trail in search of them.

There they are, 50 meters ahead on a cliffside road. Most likely having followed my instructions, they are now quite a distance from where we parted.

However.

“WATCH OUT!”

There is a fissure running towards them, threatening to cut off the cliff that they are standing on.

Question is, are there 10 seconds left before the ground gives way and throws the entire group to the bottom of the valley?

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Chapter 11: About This World

10 seconds. Which equates to 1 round in D&B.

This unit of time will most likely become the deciding factor between my life and death.

Mora and the adventurers were already on the verge of being caught up in the cliff's collapse when I got to them. The only reason why I was able to use [Wall of Force] to create a floor and walls and stairs to save them was because I had those 10 seconds.

After that, I could leisurely shuttle everyone to a safe place using the phantom horse. Most likely due to having flown around in the flesh, the flying sickness was not so bad this time around.

Because of how tired everyone was, we agreed to take a break after coming out of the forest.

♥♦♣♠

As expected, all of the adventurers are pressing me for an explanation of what just happened. Although they didn't actually see me chanting, "a meteor just coincidentally fell onto the army of anki" didn't work. It didn't hurt to try, though.

"Well, in any case, we understand now that you are a great magician—no, wizard. Margils…… -sama…… should we call you that?"

After going to the trouble of starting a fire and brewing a pot of shil tea (the one doing the pouring is Mora though), it appears that Sedam has largely calmed down.

Though calm, his voice and face are, as can be expected, still a bit hard.

Looking around, I see that Ted and Jiruk are outright frightened. Torad and Fijika look uneasy, and Claura is blatantly being wary.

Mora is looking on with worry.

"Please don't. I am not a noble, nor am I that great. I'm just your average citizen. Please act normally with me. Normally."

Adding a -sama for a salesman already feels bad enough. Please spare me from being treated as 'a great wizard-sama.' But well, a corner of my mind understands that after doing what I did, 'average citizen' isn't going to cut it.

"Margils-sama! It is unthinkable for a personage capable of mowing down such a number of anki in one blow to be addressed without the -sama honorific!"

"Margils-sama is a great hero!"

As I'd expected, Jiruk and Ted are desperately objecting. It's at the level where I can ask "what kind of bullying is this supposed to be," but they are most likely doing this to not evoke my anger. From their standpoint, they might not even have a choice.

"Of course, I am extremely thankful to you. If an anki army of that scale reaches the village, it would be a catastrophe. But that is all the more reason why we are being cautious. It would be quite troublesome if, on on a 1 in a million chance, that meteor falls on our heads. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

I don't blame him.

I quietly, but carefully, enunciate my next words.

"..... I am Gio Margils, a wizard from Jiiteias. I still have a lot to learn about this world. However, I will absolutely never use the power of wizardry to commit evil acts or to harm the people of this world. So I swear."

"..... Fuun."

"A-, As I'd thought!"

"Let's all believe in Margils-sama!"

Fijika and Ted, as well as Jiruk, all look at least slightly reassured.

"Who or what do you swear to? Do you have a god?"

As expected of the Monk to ask such a question. Hmmm, how should I answer this?

“..... I do not know if he is the same as the god you all believe in, but my oath is by The Guardian.”

“Hou……”

I am just raising the first name on my mental list of existences that seem kind of godlike. The one who muttered what sounded like interest was Sedam. Torad simply has his arms crossed. The thought that I might be in hot water if his religion is oppressing believers of The Guardian as heathens or pagans flashes across my mind, but the die has already been cast.

“I’ve never heard of such a god before. But he surely must be a good god, if he is being followed by someone who uses his power to defeat anki.”

Torad’s face breaks into a smile. I wonder if him touching one of his earlobes with the palm of his hand is a religious gesture of some sort?

“Gio-san is a really great person, but he is also really kind and, erm, he’s a kind person!”

Mora also appeals to the adventurers on my behalf. I feel apologetic, having such a young girl back me up even though we’ve only known each other for two days. But is it my imagination, or is this girl calculating the timing of her input?

“..... Yep, that’s right, isn’t it. How can we not trust in the hero who saved the village?”

While smiling, Sedam gave voice to both what I wanted to hear and what I didn’t want to hear. I am really not hero material.

“You know, that Guardian might be the one who brought you here. How about asking him for help?”

Sedam claps my shoulder. You, good sir, are way more reliable than The Guardian is.

♥♦♣♠

After the break, we go out to the highway and strike east.

This road, which crosses the plains east to west, is covered with stone paving, which reveals that this world’s level of civilization is by no means low. According to Sedam, we will be arriving in Yuule tomorrow morning, after camping out for a night.

The duration of the [Phantom Horse] spell was up since a while ago, so now Mora is walking next to me. The Jyagul statue and jute bag are still floating along behind, though.

I do have a spell that can transport this number of people at high speed, but I want some time before we reach the village, so I didn’t mention it. With Mora’s father’s feelings in mind, I also want to reunite the two of them as soon as possible, but he’ll have to be satisfied with the fact that I’ve already saved her from the mountain bandits.

While looking southward at the mountainous area and forest where we had been just earlier, I first talk to Sedam.

“As I said before, I know almost nothing at all about this continent. Can you teach me? Even the simplest thing is fine.”

This is exactly what I want the time for. Before reaching the village and coming

into contact with a large number of people, I want to learn Sedia's commonsense, and mentally ready myself.

What I'm most curious about, as it seems so important, is the relationship between anki and wizardry, but let's start with the basics.

"That's quite a broad question. What do you want to know specifically, Margils-dono?"

It seems that inside his head, this way of addressing me has already taken root. Well, let's just bear it.

"That's true…… Alright then, how about the countries and history of the continent?"

For some reason, Sedam laughs delightedly.

"If I am to speak of this, one or two nights would still be insufficient. Let's go further in depth after we set up camp……"

"I'm sorry, please give me just the outline for now. In simple terms."

"..... Well that's fine too, I suppose."

Clearly enthusiastic about this subject, his summary turned out very easy to understand.

Firstly, the region that we are currently in is called Liuus, which is located near the centre of the whole continent, and is comprised mainly of Liuus Lake and the city states and small countries that dot its shores. As I had heard from Mora, these small countries are all allied together under the name Liuus Union.

This highway and Yuule are both within the borders commanded by the Carbanera Knight Order.

At the other end of this highway lies Liuus Lake and the city of Lelis, which is Mora's and these adventurers' birthplace. Further west beyond Yuule is a very dangerous wilderness, but beyond even that is a rich and bountiful country, so at times there are travellers or caravans or adventurers coming and going. Far to the north of Liuus Lake is the largest country on the continent, Shulendal Kingdom, while the south is currently embroiled in a rebellion that is causing public order problems even in Liuus.

"I see, I see……"

This is so similar to the moments in TRPGs where, at the start of a new scenario, the game master does the "you are now in a ~~~ world" part that I find myself unconsciously nodding along.

It seems to me that it would be safe to say that this world is, in general, of the medieval Europe variety.

"Alright, next question. What are anki?"

"..... That's a difficult one."

Even Sedam, who I now know really enjoys talking, struggled a bit, but the overall gist of his explanation of anki is as follows.

Firstly, the term 'anki' is the catch-all term for a variety of different races, including small demons, large demons, and rock demons. What makes them distinctive is their unappeasable desire to destroy all intellectual living creatures who are not anki, including humans, dwarves, and elves (there really are elves).

Almost all countries and regions acknowledge anki to be an absolute enemy to all humankind. There is even an unwritten rule that in the event of anki appearance, all nearby conflicts must cease and all forces present must participate in a joint campaign against the anki.

“After all, there was a time in history when the anki nearly completely wiped out the human race.”

So revealed Sedam grudgingly.

Fortunately, the absolute number of anki today is not high. Sedam and the other adventurers have only come upon anki a few times, and in all of those cases, what they found were only ‘stragglers’ that had gotten separated from the mob.

Strangely, anki do not have a specific homeland. Instead, they ‘build nests before anyone notices.’ Once built, a nest will continue spawning anki limitlessly. Which is why when a large scale anki nest is found, there is no choice but for everyone to join forces to destroy it. In some countries, this job has apparently become a duty for the nobles and knights.

“What was the case this time? I find it hard to call that number mere stragglers though.”

“You’re right.”

Sedam scrunches his face into a grimace.

“Then it would mean that there is a nest nearby……? It must be destroyed, then.”

“When this is reported to the Knight Order, that is most likely what things will

turn to, yes.”

He sounds averse to flaunting his power, and maybe even reluctant to fight. But anki are not existences that can be left alone for personal reasons, as I’ve already learned firsthand. This is what I meant about Sedam being reliable.

…… This has crossed my mind even before we set off, but it seems that the laid back early retirement life that I’d been looking forward to will have to be put off for a while longer.

Preparations for camping out would have been over with a single word in the game, but the real thing turns out to be a pretty big job.

But with that said, when I tried to help, Jiruk and Ted stopped me while saying “No no no no no, we cannot let Margils-sama do something so menial,” and even Sedam said “You’re our guest, so please stay still”, so all I did was watch.

While Mora and Fijika are stirring the pot that they had thrown meats and beans and spices into, I take the opportunity to chat with the magician, Claura.

This world’s ‘magic’ and my ‘wizardry’ are different, and it is about high time I got around to identifying the specific differences.

“This is not the place to go into such a topic.”

This lady with a comb adorning her wavy blond hair answered me curtly.Unnn, although she is older than Mora, talking to young women really does tire me.

“Ahh, ermm, so……”

As I am trying to find my words, Claura speaks again, while gazing intently at me

with a dangerous glint in her eyes.

“May I have some of your time once we arrive at the village? Let’s find a secluded spot and talk at length.”

“Ohhh, Margils-sama is so popular!”

Ted jokes about it next to me, but all I feel is that this is going to turn into something extremely troublesome.

“..... After all, depending on where the conversation heads, the Magician Guild might get blown sky high.”

See?

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Chapter 12: Yuule Village

After filling our bellies with hot stew, Sedam conscientiously continued explaining various things to me.

Thanks to that, I think I am mostly caught up on Sedia's history and geography, as well as the bare minimum of commonsense to get along. However, we did digress a lot along the way, so I'm sure we had missed quite a bit.

Still, Sedam's knowledge turned out to be extremely extensive.

For example, about the countries of Shulendal, Leindal, Ran Balt, and Felde, which lie on the four cardinals directions of the Liuus Union. He was able to explain everything from how each was formed to their current relationship with the Liuus Union. In contrast, Mora doesn't know of much beyond the Liuus countryside, and the rest of the adventurers, with the exceptions of Claura and Torad, are in a similar condition.

Having also been exempted from the night watch that is indispensable to camping outside, I simply fell asleep inside a borrowed tent.

♥♦♣♠

“I’m sorry, but please give me 5 more minutes.”

“We don’t mind waiting, but……”

Morning.

The adventurers had gotten up at dawn, wolfed down breakfast, and already finished cleaning and packing everything.

I, on the other hand, am running my eyes over the spellbook on my lap.

All D&B wizards must recharge used spells every morning. While my real self is repeatedly reading the words on a page, my Inner World self is writing the chant down on a fresh book. I’ve used quite a few spells yesterday, so I’d normally go over all 81 slots again, but for today, this single one will have to do.

“Alright, done. By means of this spell, may there be an invisible attendant to carry my luggage and follow me. [Sprite Porter]!”

I immediately use the spell that I’d just charged.

“It’s floating……”

“It sure is floating……” (Claura)

“See? I said it would!” (Mora)

“I’m sorry for the wait. Shall we get going?” (Gio)

What started floating is Mora's jute bag and the Jyagul statue.

I did use this spell yesterday, but its duration ran out. After trying to brainstorm other options, in the end the conclusion I reached was that it is best to just charge it again, even if it delays the departure a little.

I have a feeling that Jiruk and Ted might do the carrying for me if I ask, but Mora's luggage aside, the stone statue is most likely too heavy for them. Now, if this is actually a story, this part could be over with just a few words, but reality is not so kind.

"I really didn't see any magical power. I can say with certainty that Margils-san's 'wizardry' is something fundamentally different from my 'magic.'"

I could hear Claura muttering something like that.

Her voice was a bit too loud for merely talking to herself, but I know that I'll be told to wait again if I ask, so I'll ignore it. If I remember right, The Guardian did say something to that effect before transferring me, so I think that her deduction is correct.

But why is Mora looking so proud?

♥♦♣♠

The travelling after that was smooth going.

The season looks to be early summer. The wind is refreshing, and the expansive view of the plains feels really good.

The small smudge on the horizon has, after several hours of walking, turned into a village surrounded by cultivated fields. Further north of it, slightly to the side, a

gigantic white architecture of some sort is also visible.

“Ah, it’s Yuule!”

“What you see over there is the White Sword Castle, which is the Carbanera Knight Order’s base.”

“Seems like we’ll be able to have lunch at Pavilion of the Iron Pot Knight.”

Apparently having acknowledged my ignorance about Sedia, Mora and the adventurers are explaining things to me without me even asking. But still, what an impressive (?) name for an inn.

♥♦♣♠

Yuule is much larger than I’d expected. The buildings are gathered alongside the highway, and there is a sturdy-looking wooden wall surrounding everything. I can even see a few sentry towers.

Thing is, the front gates are left wide open, so the place doesn’t feel like it’s under heavy guard. But just in case, we left the obviously suspicious Jyagul statue and Mora’s bag in a thicket along the highway.

When we try to cross through the gate as a group, a villager apparently on duty calls out to us.

“Sedam! Is that Mora-chan that I see with you? So you got her back from the mountain bandits!!” (Guard)

“No, the one who saved Mora is this great wizard here!” (Sedam)

“Yes, that’s right!” (Mora)

“Eh, wait a—” (Gio)

“‘Wizard’? Anyways, that’s awesome! Thanks a lot!” (Guard)

“Eh, um, yes……” (Gio)

Right off the bat?! I thought they would hide it a bit more. I now feel keenly that this is not like getting caught up in a crime in Japan.

There are wagons and merchant-like types here and there on the village’s main street, which is paved with stone the same way as the highway.

What draws my eye most are the people with thick, long hair and stocky frames who are as tall as my chest…… they must be dwarves for sure. Judging by how they’re chatting and laughing with the merchants and carrying goods here and there, they look completely assimilated to the village.

“Because this village is the easternmost settlement of the Liuus Union, it’s become a base for trading with the dwarves.” (Sedam)

“My dad also trades with the dwarves.” (Mora)

“I see. By the way…… can we not make such a large fuss about me?” (Gio)

I secretly whispered what was on my mind to Sedam. In the first place, me meeting Mora was complete coincidence, and the saving part was just me using spells that I had on hand, which didn’t require much effort on my part. I feel like all Japanese in my generation would share the sentiment that blatantly flaunting the results of one’s work is a very inappropriate thing to do.

“Is that so? You have my apologies, then.” (Sedam)

“Either way, everyone will soon know about Margils-sama’s great feat anyways!” (Jiruk or Ted)

“No, but still……” (Gio)

“Ahh mou! Now you’re just being irritating. Listen up!” (Claura)

“Ow!?” (Gio)

My earlobes are being pulled by Claura. Uumu, how many years has it been since I’ve had this done to me? Still grasping my earlobe, Claura draws my face towards hers.

“You cower way too much! It’s a fact that you’re able to use this powerful thing called ‘wizardry.’ If you don’t act the corresponding attitude, then it’ll make people even more suspicious of you, you understand?!” (Claura)

“Tha-, that’s right. Gio-san is amazing after all, so please act like an amazing person.” (Mora)

For some reason, Mora’s also lecturing me while physically inserting herself in between Claura and me.

Jiruk’s and Ted’s faces are both cramped up, but it looks like they can’t do anything against Claura either.

“..... If you don’t let go of him, what attitude can he take?”

Torad pulls both ladies off of me. As expected of a Monk.

“Margils-dono, you called yourself an ‘average person.’ However, you yourself already know that that won’t fly, am I right? Just as Claura said, if heroes don’t act like heroes, it causes the surrounding people to feel uneasy. Not only that, and I really didn’t want to say this, but if it becomes known that you are a timid person, there might be people who will try to take advantage of you.”

Uumu…… I see his logic, but……

“In other words, a ‘hero with great power’ would grant people reassurance, but a ‘timid man with great power’ would cause the opposite……?” (Gio)

“That’s exactly right!” (Claura)

“Exactly!” (Mora)

“That’s about it, yes.” (Sedam)

Gah, they’re not wrong, but still……

“Al-, alrigh—” (Gio)

“Yo! Sedam! And isn’t that Mora I see!”

After I'd straightened my back and right when I’m in the middle of replying, my voice is drowned out by that of a large and fat man. Well, my words would’ve just been my usual evasive answers, so this might have been for the best.

The man who has made his way towards us and is clasping Sedam’s hand is big-boned and muscular, yet stout. He's a dwarf.

“That’s Dahbarus-san. He’s the representative of all dwarves stationed at Yuule.”

Mora quietly gives me a brief introduction.

“It’s great seeing you well, Mora. That Irudo, he’s so stricken with worry that I can’t even bear looking at him!”

“Kyah!”

The dwarf that Mora had named as Dahbarus is now holding Mora aloft and spinning her in circles while laughing heartily.

“Irudo is waiting at Pavilion of the Iron Pot Knight! Hurry to him!”

“A-..... Y-, yes!”

After lowering Mora back down, Dahbarus points at a large building standing on the main street and facing a plaza. Even from far away, I can make out the signpost with the image of a knight on it.

Having come all this way, Mora’s tension is at max, as evidenced by her running off with a flushed face.

“Al~right! Let’s drink the night away on Irudo’s wallet!”

The rest of us follow behind Mora towards the building—the inn—and Dahbaru falls into step like it’s the most natural thing to do.

“..... By the way, who’re you? Never seen you before.”

Along the way, he asks me this as if he's only just noticed.

“Ah—……”

Claura’s and Sedam’s stares hurt.

“..... Ermm. I’m from Jiiteias, I’m Gio Margils the um, great, very great wizard, yes. I’m quite…… no, more like, really, really powerful, so…… yea.” (Gio)

“Don’t really get it.” (Dahbarus)

“.....” (Sedam)

“Incompetent.” (Claura)

It’s not like I can help it, alright!? The only experience I’ve had with talking arrogantly is within TRPGs! Modesty is the hardwired default for Japanese people!

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 13

Chapter 13: Mask of a Great Wizard

Along with Dahbarus, who still doesn't understand who I am (not that I blame him), our whole group passes through the doors of Pavilion of the Iron Pot Knight. The very next moment, Mora gets swept into a fierce hug by a man.

"Mora! I'm so glad you're safe. I'm so sorry that you had to go through such an ordeal……!"

The man has brown hair and brown eyes very similar to Mora's. His clothes are embroidered and ornamented, yet look easy to move in, giving him the look of a successful commercial merchant.

"I'm all fine! Not even a scratch. Cus I got saved!"

"Ohh!? Sedam-san, thank you! Really, how can I ever repay you……!"

"Ah, no, hold on a sec. There were various developments in the situation."

The man…… Irudo is clinging to Sedam while lowering his head again and again. I

can tell from his behavior how worried he was for his daughter. Maybe I really should have hurried to the village first thing……

“Now, now, how about you calm down first. Everyone else, please rest yourselves.”

Ushered by the proprietress, all of us were settled at a table. This is completely irrelevant, but the first floor of an inn has really gotta be a tavern……

♥♦♣♠

“..... And that is all that happened.”

Irudo had been bowing his head repeatedly with such force that he was in danger of banging his head several times, but Sedam managed to stop him and give a simple explanation of the situation. Of course, he made no mention at all of the army of anki.

“Then you are the one who saved Mora…… Thank you so very much, great wizard-sama!”

“So you’re the one who…… Ohhhh! So ‘great wizard’ means ‘a really powerful magician’!”

Both Irudo and Dahbarus thank me honestly. In a way, this is a testament to Sedam’s personal character.

“D-, Don’t worry about it…… All I did was only natural as a wizard.”

At the corner of my eyes, I see Sedam and Claura making “meh, that was just passable” faces.

After that, talk turns to the adventurers' reward. Of course, Sedam declines it (but there was prior agreement that the advance payment wouldn't have to be returned). On top of which, it became that the reward would be paid to me instead.

I also try to decline it, but upon Irudo's entreaty, ended up accepting the 3,000 gold coins.

"By the way, how much is 3,000 gold coins worth? Around these parts, I mean." (Gio)

"Well, 1 gold coin can buy 1 family a day's worth of delicious food here in this town."

"3,000 gold coins is just right for buying a house in Lelis! A house just right for 2 people to live in! Do you want Father to make you the introductions?"

"I, see……?"

After a few more questions, I determine that 1 gold coin is worth about ¥10,000. Then again, with the monetary economy here not as pervasive as in Japan, apparently people like farmers and hunters live most of their lives without ever using gold coins.

But if things are like this, then it means that 3,000 gold coins is equivalent to 30 million yen.

"..... So expensive!"

30 million yen. That's higher than my net worth back in Japan, oy.

“Is it really? It’s the market price for these kinds of jobs at our Adventure Guild. After all, we are placing our lives on the line.” (Sedam)

Then again, 3,000 gold coins divided equally among 5 people means only 600 each. Considering that it was a job with a real risk of dying, this much might not be that high after all. Guess I really shouldn’t use modern Japan or D&B as standards.

“With that said, I’m afraid I don’t have the money on hand. May I trouble you to come to Lelis to claim it on a later date? I will prepare a certificate for you. For now, please accept this as an expression of my gratitude.”

With those words, Irudo hands over a leather bag filled to the brim with gold coins. So this is a hundred pieces. It’s not like I’m particularly strapped for money, though. More like, if we’re talking gold coins similar to these, I already have more than 3 million pieces……

But even I can tell that with this flow in conversation, refusing here is only going to engender bad feelings. For now, let’s thankfully accept this, and think of a way to repay him another time.

Incidentally, I also had Irudo take a look at some Jiiteias gold coins that I had in one of the pockets of my robe, and it turns out that they’re useable in the Liuus Union.

“Allow me to also give you my thanks, great wizard! If you ever find yourself in Senpu Village and in need of anything, don’t hesitate to call on me!”

Dahbarus also firmly grasps my hand with both of his while saying so. Senpu Village is apparently the name of the closest dwarven settlement from here.

From start to end, the telling of Mora’s rescue and return was accompanied by constant refills of the proprietress’ delicious shil tea.

“Gio-san. I have a favor to ask.”

Mora’s request turns out to be for help in retrieving the rest of the luggage seized by the mountain bandits. Above all, since the entire place has been raised to the top of a sheer precipice, it is a given that I would have to go. Of course, I accepted her request.

“Ahh, that’s fine and all, but can that be postponed a bit?”

“After all, there is something urgent that we really wish for Margils-dono to do.”

Mu. Oh right. I first have to destroy that anki nest.

“It's fine to do it later, but! Definitely, definitely help me with it, alright?! It’ll be really troublesome for us if that cargo is lost!”

♥♦♣♠

After that exchange, father and daughter retired to Irudo’s room. They’re apparently going to return to Lelis by joining another caravan that will be departing that way soon.

For now, I breath a sigh of relief at having cleared the first goal that I had set for myself.

“Well then, can we excuse ourselves?”

“Ah, sure.”

Sedam, Claura, and I move to another room. This is so that we can discuss our next moves.

“Our very top priority is to find and discover that anki nest.”

Sedam says that while looking at Claura and me. Naturally, we both nod.

“Thank you for taking this on. However, I’m sure that there’s still a lot that you don’t know, so let me explain my thinking first. After that, tell me if you have any questions or input.”

“Sounds good.”

As always, Sedam speaks intellectually. I really wish the young ones at my company could learn a thing or two from him.

“Upon discovery of an anki nest around these parts, it is my duty as an adventurer to report it either to the Carbanera Knight Order or the Council at Lelis. Considering the physical location, the Knight Order makes more sense. After that, the entity that received the report must use their full power to eliminate the threat.”

“With you so far.”

“However, there is a problem. Thing is, there hasn’t been any news of large-scale anki armies or nests within the last 10 years. As a result, there are those in the Council and Knight Order who have grown to think lightly of their duty to eliminate anki.”

“Well, it's a fact that a large-scale anki army did appear……”

“Question is, will they believe that?”

So said Sedam unpleasantly. Claura is nodding in agreement with a sour look on her face.

“Eh? But, I mean……”

“You planning on saying something like ‘There was a huge army of anki, but a meteor fell and wiped them all out’? Who would believe that?”

“Ahh, so that’s what you meant.”

I’d forgotten, but this is not modern-day Japan. The fact of the anki army’s appearance is now nothing more than information that hasn’t even been reported yet. Evidence that the army had even existed and that I’d dropped a meteor on it can only be found back at the site. Things would be altogether different if the army did manage to reach Yuule or someone from the Knight Order had witnessed it firsthand……

“We do have a certain amount of trust from the Knight Order and the Council. However, they won’t believe this story. And even if they do, there is a high chance that they will look at the situation too lightly and not take the necessary countermeasures in time.”

Unnn…… this kind of thing happens a lot in Japan too……

Ah.

If that’s the case…… ah, a lightbulb just went off inside my head as I realized what he is getting at.

“Then I simply have to drop another meteor and prove that I really do possess the power to wipe out an entire army—is that what you want to say?”

“Our conversation from a while back was already alluding to this.”

…… I see. Whether or not this incident is believed hinges on whether or not the existence of an irregular such as myself is believed. Furthermore, if I am thought of as a dangerous (or perhaps unreliable) person with the power to annihilate an army of anki, then all is lost. That’s where the “act like a hero” advice ties in.

“Uumu……”

I understand what Sedam is saying. My own thinking was far too lenient. Even in regards to destroying the anki nest, I was just thinking that I could tag along with Sedam’s party and secretly use a spell or two when needed.

♥♦♣♠

After becoming employed, I have lived through twenty years of the stormy waves within my company.

Going off of my experience from those years, this conversation is now on the creation of a ‘persona.’ And I’m not referring to that power that you discover upon absorbing your shadow and whatnot. No, I am talking about ‘bringing out the part of myself relevant to the role assigned to me.’ Up until a few days ago, I had been wearing the persona of ‘a veteran company employee with 20 years of continuous service.’ When off the clock, I was ‘a gentle middle-aged guy who loves gaming.’ What persona should I adopt in which situations? Having the discernment to answer this question correctly can almost be said to be the deciding factor between good and bad company employees.

“That might be the reason why I have been feeling flighty and unsettled ever

since coming over here……”

I murmured to myself while looking up at the ceiling. Indeed, after opening my eyes and finding myself in a jail cell, I’ve been my bare self the entire time, without a single persona to put on. In other words, I was without a foundation upon which to base my existence.

“I understand fully now.” (Gio)

“Very relieved to hear that.” (Sedam

“Do you really, fully understand?” (Claura)

“..... For now, I’ll work at acting more the part of ‘a great wizard.’ Me saying this about myself is a bit, you know, but it’s the truth after all. However, whether I’m a hero or not is a completely different question. ‘Hero’ is a title that can only be granted by other people, right?”

Well, I’ve already been given this power, so there’s no helping it. Let’s put on that exaggerated mask of ‘a great wizard.’ But still, it doesn’t necessarily mean that I have to give up my dream of a laid-back early retirement life.

“For now, please do that.” (Sedam)

“..... Well, that should be enough at this point in time.” (Claura)

It appears that I have successfully managed to appease both Sedam and Claura for the moment.

♥♦♣♠

First of all, we need to go to White Sword Castle, the base of the Carbanera Knight Order.

It fell to Sedam, Claura, Torad, and I to borrow horses and make the urgent trip.

But as usual, while everyone is busy going around making all the necessary preparations, I alone have nothing at all to do. Seeing that, Claura comes over to talk to me.

“Do you have some time to spare?”

“Ah, but of course.”

This is most likely about the magic vs wizardry thing from before. Something about blowing apart the Magician Guild……?

“It would be more appropriate to put on more airs when you speak, ‘oh great wizard.’”

“..... Ahh, I don’t mind.”

Doesn’t hurt to put her precious advice into practice. But rather than putting on airs, I enter my ‘when a new employee wants to ask me a question’ mode.

“That's not bad at all.”

Claura laughs a little. This might be the first time that she’s shown me her natural laughing face.

“So, what is it that you wish to ask?”

At the company, “what do you want to ask” would have sufficed, but I’m ad-libbing here.

“There is a lot, actually, but we are in a state of emergency right now, so I’ll limit it to one.”

She looks straight into my eyes, and quietly poses her question.

“It has been 200 years since the first magical academy headmaster founded the academy. Magic, as a system, has been developed and built upon from generation to generation, all the way down through the ages, uninterrupted. I, too, have devoted much time and effort to reach where I currently am. However, the combined might of the entire Magician Guild probably is still no match for your ‘wizardry.’ So my question is, is ‘wizardry’ something that only you alone have been blessed with? Or perhaps——”

Her voice cracks up. When she continues, it is in a shaky voice like that of a child who has just heard a frightening rumor.

“Is it a set of techniques that can be learned and acquired by other people?”

“.....”

It’s just a bunch of settings that my friend and I made up because it used to be a game.

I can’t bring myself to tell her that, though.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 14

Chapter 14: Magic Board

A blond beauty is gazing at me with moist eyes and hanging onto my next words.

This situation, if considered by itself, might or might not be quite erotic. But I currently haven't the time to entertain such thoughts.

So what is it that she's trying to say?

If my 'wizardry' is a set of techniques that could be learned and used by others, then it would void all meaning from the 'magic' that she's worked so hard to acquire…… that is what I think I hear. I see, this really could destroy the Magician Guild.

More like, if that's really the case, then I should be the one to dogeza and apologize.

But well, uumu…… I don't actually know. Although it's true that Gio's wizardry is something that my game master friend and I had thought up, it wasn't actually real until I came to this world. However, the settings notebook that The

Guardian used as reference should indeed have contained instructions for how to become a level 1 wizard (I should know, I was the one who wrote them).

If someone in this world tries putting those instructions into practice, they might actually succeed. But of course, The Guardian granting wizardry to me alone as an exception, and this world's residents being incapable of using it, is also a very real possibility. Would the latter be a relieve for her?

This is all just my suppositions, though. I don't profess to understand the female mind.

"..... Is there something you're uneasy about?"

For now, I try to probe for more information.

"'Uneasy'..... I guess it could be called that. I feel like the world that I've always believed in is under threat of collapsing from its very foundation up."

"I see."

My deduction might have been spot on.

…… At this point in time, I also don't know the truth, so let's just honestly tell her so.

"Indeed there are techniques to wizardry. However, I have never tried to teach anyone, so even if I do teach someone, whether or not they can actually use it…… To be honest, I have no clue. However, I fully understand Clau-..... your unease. The reason is because I, too, am uneasy."

(T/N: Quick Japanese lesson. When you speak to someone of equal status as

yourself, you're supposed to address them by name, not the 'you' pronoun. However, when speaking to someone below you in status, the pronoun is used instead to emphasize that difference in status by keeping that distance. That's why Gio re-worded himself.)

"Is, that so?"

My words cause Claura to blink. Along with relief at the absence of a definitive answer, I also detect interest in the second half of what I said.

"The possibility of the world that I'd believed in collapsing…… From my point of view, the 'magic' that you people use is more than enough to be considered a marvel. After all, I did almost get killed by the magician Jyagul……"

Half of that was my true feelings. The other half was to make sure that there was no drop in trust due to my inability to provide an answer by expressing my empathy——it is one of my dirty secrets to success as a salaryman.

"..... It's true that this conversation won't go far with me asking all the questions."

Claura shows me a small smile.

This is perfect timing. Let's ask her the things about magic that are bothering me.

(T/N: Lol she limited herself to just one but he's gonna ask all of his?)

♥♦♣♠

"In the first place, magic is the technique to manipulate the magical power circulating within oneself in order to manipulate the power hidden in the natural

world.”

In response to my question, Claura answers in her usual self-important tone.

“Only 1 in 10 humans are born with magical power inside and the innate ability to feel its circulation. Without this talent, it is impossible to become a magician.”

“I see. Those who possess magical power are also able to see other people’s magical power, I assume?”

“..... That is right. I could tell just by looking at you that you have absolutely zero magical power.”

(T/N: Which means it’s impossible for Gio to use magic.)

Putting that aside, she just said that magic is power hidden within the natural world. My wizardry is the calling of the power of chaos from beyond nature in order to alter reality, so the two are fundamentally different.

“Does that mean that anyone born with magical power can become a magician?”

“That is not the case. Despite possessing magical power, if the person is incapable of seeing the ‘magic board,’ they cannot be called a proper magician.”

Another word that I've never heard of before. Magic board?

Though struggling the whole way, Claura gives a faithful explanation of ‘magic board,’ which is apparently a phenomenon that can be perceived only by magicians. The following is a summarized version of what I learned.

As magician apprentices continue their training to sense and control magical power, ‘something like a window frame with glowing words written in it’ appears in their light of sight. This ‘something like a window frame’ is called the magic board (it apparently has a much longer proper name), and the words that show up are called ‘magic characters.’ The reading, understanding, and rearranging of magic characters is the foundation of using magic. Even among those who possess magical power, being able to see the magic board is a stringent requirement that only 1 in 10 pass. Within Lelis, there are only a total of 12 official magicians.

“As an example, my magic board is currently showing, aside from aggregate magical power numbers, the characters for fire, wind, whip, and arrow. If I am to combine these magic characters together in my mind…… I could select the fire and whip characters and strongly visualize a whip of flames striking an enemy—the result would be the spell {Fire Whip}. That’s pretty much how it’s done.”

“Hou…… I see……”

Magic is surprisingly quite systematic……

“By the way, when you saw my phantom horse, you were quite surprised. Is it because magic is only ever used for attacking?”

“..... More like, I still can’t get over how wizardry can cause such weird effects.”

Claura gracefully shrugs her shoulders.

“Ahh, speaking of which. This is something I heard from that Jyagul guy, but would you happen to know what ‘Afalsal’ is?”

I keep on using polite speech out of habit. It seems that it will be a while before I

get used to the mask of a great wizard.

(T/N: For the past while Gio has been using polite speech and then correcting himself. Just adding the desuka → kana distinction to the name → pronoun thing from earlier.)

“Ahh, that…… It is an island country of sorcerers that lies far to the west. They are a pure-blooded race that has been inheriting a unique kind of magic, which they call sorcery, from ancient times. Most likely, he saw you doing magic-like things without having any magical power and thought that you were related to that dubious bunch.”

A unique magic……

I feel like the more I ask, the more questions I end up with.

But well, this is what it means to learn about the world, I suppose.

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Without incident, we reached White Sword Castle after a few hours.

The castle walls are built on top of several of the gently sloping hills sprinkled all over the open plains, and tower at least 15m in height. Punctuated by numerous guard towers of proportional scale, its entire length is dyed pure white. This is definitely a white sword.

According to Sedam, whenever a monster causes harm within Yuule or its surrounding lands, the residents would almost always turn to the Carbanera Knight Order for help.

To the west of the white castle stretches a reddish-brown wilderness.

This place is the border between the territories of man and monster.

The Carbanera Knight Order is apparently an offshoot of the Order of Shulendal. Having played a major role in a great anki vs. human war that had occurred several centuries ago, the Carbanera Knight Order has ever since been tasked with protecting the peace in western Liuus. Therefore, they are indeed powerful. However, Sedam did express worries about their morale being low after 10 whole years of minimal anki sightings.

♥♦♣♠

I am feeling that worry firsthand at the moment.

After passing through two pairs of castle gates, Sedam, Claura, and I requested an audience with the Grand Cross. So far as it goes, we were treated with respect and, in short order, escorted to what seems to be a conference room.

(T/N: According to Wikipedia, the top person of a chivalric order is called the Grand Cross. Captain Commander, which people might be more familiar with from Bleach, is not so apt here because later on, at least one of the lower ranks is titled as Company Commander, which is higher than Captain Commander.)

However, the person who was waiting there was not the Grand Cross, but a middle-aged man who identified himself as a staff officer.

“Being the highly regarded adventurers that you two are, I don’t think you are lying, but……”

The staff officer, whose name is Espine, is looking at me with a blatant “that's gotta be a lie” look on his face.

Well, it’s not like I didn’t expect such a reaction.

“I don’t know about Sedam, but are you possibly doubting me, the 5th Seat of the Lelis Magician Guild?” (Claura)

If I remember correctly, there are 12 official magicians in Lelis, right? How big a deal is the 5th Seat? The staff officer is totally panicking, though.

“Of, of course not! It’s just that, um, turning a magician into stone, and calling

down a meteor…… It all sounds so absurd.” (Espine)

“Apologies, but may we meet directly with the Grand Cross himself? If he is not available, the 1st Company Commander would suffice.” (Sedam)

“The Grand Cross Sir Amrand gal Saadishu is of ill health. And the 1st Company Commander Arnogia-dono is out on patrol……” (Espine)

Such complete rejection is, to be honest, beyond what we had expected. I steal a sideways glance at Sedam.

“..... If that is the case, then we shall wait until Arnogia’s return.” (Sedam)

“Unfortunately, without express permission from headquarters, outsiders are not allowed to stay overnight at this castle.” (Espine)

“..... Tch” (Sedam)

He clicked his tongue?! I see, so Sedam is the type that can’t communicate with headstrong people.

“Don’t we simply have to force our way to the Grand Cross’ room?” (Claura)

…… Claura is clearly out of the question.

Am I the only left to do any proper talking? I myself don’t mind long negotiations, but I think Sedam or Claura might blow their fuse before I make enough headway.

“Excuse me, you really ought to check this man’s identity once again.” (Sedam)

“Are you trying to say that this personage is a swindler?!” (Claura)

I’m glad that you guys are getting angry on my behalf, but……

I hold Claura back and am about to speak to the staff officer when suddenly……

The door violently bangs open. In its wake, a large-bodied man sluggishly enters the room.

That huge body of his…… the most apt simile that I can think of is ‘like a sumo wrestler.’ He looks like he weighs maybe even 200kgs. I find it hard to believe that he has on knight armor, but his suit is most likely custom-made. His face tells me that he’s only in his twenties, but I wonder if he’s suffering from some adult disease……?

“Whaaat are you guys making a ruckus about, in my castle?”

That was the first thing he said. Don’t tell me, he’s the Grand Cross?!

“..... Gillion-dono, this castle is under the ownership of the entire Order as a whole.”

Sedam’s and Claura’s stares being below zero, I can understand. But for some reason, even the staff officer’s response is cold. My worry for him also melted within the next second.

“HAH?! I’m a direct descendant of the founder of that Order! My esteemed name is Gillion gal Carbanera! And this is the Carbanera Knight Order! Which means it belongs to me, all of it!” (Gillion)

“Such a thing is not stipulated within the Order’s regulations.” (Espine)

I see. It probably wasn’t his intention, but still, thank you for the easy to understand introduction. I’ve seen this kind every once in a while back in my company. If I fan his self-conceit as a man, I can easily bring him to lend us an ear.

“Nii-san! What are you doing in front of outsiders!”

A new character has come onstage.

Entering the room by pushing aside the huge shouting man blocking the door is a female knight with a wild red mane. Her armor looks simpler than what Gillion and the staff officer is wearing, so maybe her position is not so high.

…… Wait a second. Did she just say “Nii-san”?

“Sedam, Claura. I’m so sorry about the unsightly display.” (female knight)

“..... We don’t mind.” (Claura)

“Rio, nice timing. Listen to us. Anki have appeared. We believe there is a large nest.” (Sedam)

“What did you say?!”

“Is that true?!”

After hearing Sedam’s concise explanation, the female knight called Rio aside, even Gillion shows an extreme reaction.

“Anki, you said anki! On top of which, a nest!? Alright! Alright! Where is it?! The Carbanera Knight Order! The great me shall smash it to dust!” (Gillion)

“Sedam, are you sure? If that’s true, then we must do something about it……” (Lioria)

“Gillion-dono, Lioria-dono, there is no sense of realism at all to this report. Please do not believe it.” (Espine)

“.....”

Both Sedam and Claura are struck dumb by the three very different reactions. Gillion and Lioria seem willing to hear us out, but I don’t know their standing within the Order. There is nothing more unproductive than meetings where no one knows who’s in charge of what.

No helping it, then.

The salaryman part of me is loathe to do this, but let’s go with the ‘I’m a great wizard’ strategy.

“It is a pleasure to meet you both, Gillion-dono and Lioria-dono.”

I slowly stand up, praying that I look composed, and place one hand on my chest as I take a bow.

“Who on earth are you? New guy with Sedam’s?” (Gillion)

“You appear to be a magician, but……” (Lioria)

“No, I am not a magician. I am the ‘Great Wizard’ Gio Margils.” (Gio)

Gillion and Lioria exchange looks. Considering that they are brother and sister, their relationship might be actually not that bad.

“He’s not joking. He used his wizardry to bring down the magician who had been leading the mountain bandits near Yuule, and even annihilated an army of anki before it could do anything.” (Sedam)

“..... What the hell?” (Gillion)

“That really does sound quite hard to believe.” (Lioria)

“If it is my ability that is in doubt, debate will be unnecessary. For it shall speak for itself.” (Gio)

I stretch out a hand while flapping the edge of my robe in an exaggerated motion, and point towards a spot on the floor.

“By means of this spell, may the stone statue in my possession be summoned. [Apotsu].”

(T/N: The author’s spell names have all been English up to now, but not this one. I can’t seem to find the English counterpart, but Apotsu is the Japanese term for the instantaneous transportation of something other than the caster, such as the summoning of an item. Please comment if you know the English counterpart. Accio doesn't count cus it’s not instantaneous.)

The space above where I’m pointing to distorts, and from it the statue oozes into view, Jyagul’s face still petrified in a mask of terror.

“Whaaaa?!” (Espine)

“Nga……” (Gillion)

“Kyah!” (Lioria)

The staff officer’s, Gillion’s, and Lioria’s eyes all look about to pop out with surprise. I was told that magic is only ever used for attacking, which is why I decided to use this spell as a demonstration.

“This man is the leader of the mountain bandits that attacked a caravan of the merchant Irudo from Lelis and also kidnapped said merchant’s daughter. I hereby hand him over to be processed by the law of this land.” (Gio)

I actually don’t know whether this Order has such authority or not, it was just something that I added on the spur of the moment.

“However, he can hardly be interrogated or made to pay for his crimes in his current state. As such, we shall now revert him. By means of this spell, may all magical power within a 3m radius be reduced to nothing. [Dispel Magic].” (Gio)

The spell that I just used was to dispel his [Stoned] status. The stone statue shines brightly for an instant. As the light fades, we see a miserable-looking man collapsed on the floor, prostrate and drained of all spirit.

“A…… ua……” (Jyagul)

Even more than the summoning, it seems that the statue turning into a real, living human is a greater shock.

Staring at Jyagul, who can't even speak properly, much less stand stand up, the knights have mouths as well as eyes wide open, looking completely befuddled.

"The st-, the statue, human……" (Espine)

"Awawa…… awawa……" (Lioria)

"A-, amazing……" (Gillion)

In front of the three dumbfounded people, I slowly walk towards Jyagul. Stay calm, stay calm.

Looking at Jyagul's vacant, empty eyes pricks my conscience a little, but I ignore it and reclaim my Wizardry Staff from his hands.

"This is my personal possession." (Gio)

"Y-, you…… Who on earth are you?" (Gillion)

The large knight's forehead is covered with cold sweat as he repeats his question from the start in a completely different tone. When I take a second look, I notice that he's taken a step forward, as if to protect the redhead female knight. I somehow like him already.

"Once again, I am the great wizard Gio Margils. By my name, I have a request for the illustrious Carbanera Knight Order. I wish to report about the anki menace before either the Grand Cross or someone who can represent the entire Order. If this will require time to arrange, then I wish to request permission to stay here in the meantime." (Gio)

I try my best to appear dignified by speaking slowly and solemnly. As a finisher, I

strike the butt of my Wizardry Staff against the floor, causing a ringing ‘ton’ sound.

“Regarding permission from headquarters and all such, I have faith that it shall be procured without trouble, yes?”

The knights are nodding so hard that I can almost hear their teeth rattling inside their skulls.

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Chapter 16: The Carbanera Siblings

In the end, because the knight Arnogia will only be back from his patrols tomorrow, it became that we would stay in the White Sword Castle for the night.

Sedia's nights are early. Due to fuel being scarce and thus expensive, everyone goes to bed soon after sunset. We are currently in the guest room that Espine had ushered us to (out of gentlemanly concern for Claura, a partitioning screen has also been set up).

I, of course, am not feeling sleepy at all. Right when I ama bout to ask for an introduction about the Carbanera Knight Order, Sedam starts talking, as if he was just waiting for me. Seated in an easy chair in front of the fireplace, he looks primed for storytelling.

“West of the White Sword Castle is the Plains of Twilight. The place used to be called the Plains of Dawn, though. After I explain how the name change came to be, you will also understand how and why the Carbanera Knight Order was founded.” (Sedam)

The founder of the Order, as well as its first generation Grand Cross, was a man

named Gilzarl gal (great knight) Carbanera.

Around 150 years ago, the knight order that he was leading performed a great many achievements in the decisive battle between humans and anki on the Plains of Dawn, and was rewarded by the kingdom of Shulendal with the great fortress Rastland, which had been constructed in that place.

However, 30 years later, the 'Storm of the Dead' incident occurred, which was a sudden mass appearance of undead. With the reason still unknown, the great fortress was eventually overtaken. At that time, Gilzarl was also killed in battle, and it is rumored that he still wanders around as one of the undead to this very day.

The remnants of the knight order fled eastward together with the populace, then built the White Sword Castle and took up an oath to protect that land from both undead and anki.

"It was after this incident that the Plains of Dawn became known as the Plains of Twilight." (Sedam)

"So undead really do exist…… ahem. In other words, umm, it was after the incident 120 years ago that the Carbanera Knight Order was displaced to their current base, and the first generation Grand Cross also died during that incident. Ahh, is that why the current Grand Cross is no longer a Carbanera? To take responsibility for what had happened?" (Gio)

"The most relevant reason is something else. 15 years ago, the Grand Cross at the time forcefully initiated a large-scale operation to recapture Rastland……" (Sedam)

"I can see where this is going……" (Gio)

“It was a massive failure. On top of which, when an anki nest was discovered 5 years later, they were no longer capable of doing any proper fighting.” (Claura)

“So, well, that Grand Cross is the father of Gillion, whom you've already met. After being forced to step down from the seat of Grand Cross, talk is that he is now pretty much a vegetable. The current Grand Cross was Grand Commander at the time.” (Sedam)

(T/N: Grand Commander = vice-Grand Cross, if you will)

“He is a wise person. His son Arnogia-sama might be a bit indecisive at times, but is overall an outstanding knight. When he comes back, I am sure that he will make the correct judgment.” (Claura)

By the way, the organizational structure of the Order is as follows: Grand Cross at the top, Grand Commander right below, then the Company Commanders of the 1st to the 4th companies. The Company Commander of the 1st Company is the eldest son of the current Grand Cross, Arnogia, while the Company Commander of the 2nd Company is Gillion.

“What about that female knight?”

“Her name is Lioria Carbanera. Gillion’s little sister. But from a different mother. Although it’s hard to believe that they even share the same father.”

“Unlike her brother, that girl is a proper knight. Her position is Vice-Commander of the 2nd Company. She is still lacking in experience, but……” (Claura)

Their evaluation of Gillion is so low.

At that moment, a knock rings out.

“Please pardon me. Sedam-dono, Claura-dono, and G-Great Wizard Margils-dono. Are you all still awake?” (Lioria)

The voice belongs to a young lady. It is the voice of the female knight Lioria, who we had just been talking about. I thought Sedam was going to answer, but he’s just intently staring at me, so there’s no helping it.

“Indeed, we are awake. Do you have some business with us?” (Gio)

The corner of Claura’s mouth is twitching while she’s looking at me. Don’t you dare laugh.

“What a relief. I’m sorry for my rudeness, but can you please open the door? Although it is late, supper has been prepared, so if it would please you to follow me……”

Supper. We did not expect to be served supper, so we had already had a meal of preserved foodstuffs. But with that said, declining here would be disrespectful……

“We are not terribly hungry at the moment, but since you’ve gone to the trouble, we shall take you up on your kindness.” (Gio)

I made the decision by myself without consulting Sedam, but rather than looking slighted, he is smirking while being the first to stand up and open the door.

The figure of Lioria with candlestand in hand emerges from the dim hallway. Now that I’m getting a proper look at her, I realize that she is a beautiful girl with lots of spirit in her almond-shaped eyes. Her expression is currently stiff with

nervousness though.

“It shall please Margils-dono to join the supper. Are we also invited?” (Sedam)

“Thank you very much, my brother will be glad. And of course! Both of you are also very welcome.” (Lioria)

The first half was said to me, and the second half to Sedam and Claura.

But still, her brother will be glad? Don’t tell me the host is……

“Ohh, Wizard-dono! Please eat lots and lots! This castle’s cooks were all handpicked by me. Isn’t their skill impressive?” (Gillion)

“Mmm……” (Gio)

As expected, the person waiting for us in the castle’s dining hall turns out to be Gillion. The long and stately table that he is sitting at is almost buried under an enormous variety of dishes, all of which are still giving off steam. What a fitting picture this makes.

I am asked to sit next to Gillion, who has apparently claimed the responsibility of making sure that I enjoy myself. I dare say that inside Gillion’s mind, hospitality = making the other person eat delicious food. Each and every dish really is delicious though.

“As for this bird, it was first pickled in horse milk wine for a night before it was roasted. Isn’t it just so soft?”

As I bite into the slightly sweet and sour drumstick, an impressive amount of meat juices squirt into my mouth. But my capacity is just a little……

“Nii-san, pressing too insistently is bad manners. Can’t you see that you’re troubling Wizard-dono?” (Lioria)

“Shut up! You keep your mouth shut! I’m having an important conversation here!” (Gillion)

Which part of what we were talking about was important…… But still, I guess I’m kind of like their sponsor now. I can put up with this much. But rather than that, how about I have him show me a hidden talent or two……

“?!”

In such a way, I naturally slipped into ‘salaryman mode,’ but Sedam and Claura’s cold, painful stares quickly brings me back.

“Gillion, please get around to that ‘important talk’ that you spoke of. Margils-dono appears to be a bit bored already.” (Sedam)

“Margils-dono’s time is too precious to be wasted on meaningless banter, understood?” (Claura)

“What did you two say, you mere adventurers?!” (Gillion)

“Aniki! Knock it off already!” (Lioria)

“Buh!?” (Gillion)

As Gillion got up slamming both hands on the table and grinding his teeth, Lioria’s fist smashes into his face from the side. It was no open-handed slap. The sharp sound of bone colliding with bone is testament that it was a serious

straight punch.

What is up with this pair of siblings. Seeing how Sedam and Claura are not reacting in any way, does that mean that this is how things usually are?

“..... Please accept my sincerest apologies, Great Wizard Margils-dono. I beg of you to lend an ear to what my brother has to say.” (Lioria)

Lioria straightens her back, places her right hand on her chest, then lowers her head deeply. Gillion, on the other hand, is sulking with his head turned to the side, and is gulping down wine without minding his swollen cheek at all.

“..... Very well. But only if he jumps straight to it. Now.” (Gio)

I really want to scold Gillion about turning his head this way or not making his little sister apologize on his behalf, but Lioria’s earnesty overwhelms all such thoughts, causing me to nod before I know it.

Gillion, after draining his glass, finally looks at me again.

“The talk is simple. Wizard-dono, please take me in as your subordinate!” (Gillion)

“.....” (Gio)

Well, there are guys like this every once in a while…… is the thought that absentmindedly floated into my head. When I steal a glance at Sedam and Claura without moving my head, I see Sedam clicking his tongue and looking away irritably, while Claura’s veins are standing out as a dangerous smile comes over her face.

“Ah, sorry. No thanks.” (Gio)

I don’t think anyone can blame me for accidentally replying in casual speech.

“WHAT DID YOU SAY?! THE GREAT ME! DID YOU JUST TURN DOWN AN INVITATION FROM THE HEIR OF THE CARBANERA HOUSE?!” (Gillion)

Sweeping all of the dishes off the table with a log-like arm, Gillion roars in anger.

“..... Presently, I have no intention of taking anyone in.” (Gio)

…… If it was the me back in Japan, there is no way that I would have been able to stay calm while being yelled at like this right in my face. After merely two nights, how greatly I have changed.

“But I’m a Carbanera!” (Gillion)

“Aniki!” (Lioria)

“Ouch! Ow ow ow ow!” (Gillion)

Gillion had raised a fist and was flinging it around, but Lioria grabbed that fist. She grabbed it, then she twisted it, until the pain forced Gillion to stand on tiptoes. Then she begins to easily drag him out of the room by keeping him in that position.

“Ow! Lio! You’re just my little sister and…… ow ow ow!” (Gillion)

“I’m very sorry, Wizard-dono, and Sedam, and Claura. To think that he would say something like that…… I’ll definitely make sure that he apologizes later on!”

(Lioria)

The two of them leave the dining hall, with him still yelling abuse and her bobbing her head up and down in apology (all while still dragging him along).

“I knew the topic would be something stupid.” (Sedam)

So muttered Sedam as he pours first-class wine into his glass.

“..... Are the Grand Cross and his son more decent and normal?” (Gio)

My question somehow came out sounding more like a wish.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 17

Chapter 17: The Melancholy of the Knights

The next morning.

“What are you calmly reading a book for!” (Claura)

“No, this is necessary for me ahhhh now I have to start all over again.” (Gio)

With my spellbook spread open, I was in the middle of recharging the spells that I’d used up when Claura began pulling on my earlobe. No matter how much I may be a level 36 wizard, even I cannot concentrate while being on the receiving end of such violence. The Inner World me was even worse off, forced to flee the Spell Archive even while the walls were shaking with the threat of collapsing completely at any moment. I mean, when I put it this way, it may sound kind of comical, but it was a situation where my mind could have received some serious damage, alright?

“..... And that is how I ‘charge’ my spells. Spells that are not charged cannot be used.” (Gio)

I ended up giving away the weakness of wizardry, but I had no choice but to tell Claura a little bit about how spells work.

“Is that so. I’m sorry for having gotten in your way, then. But if that’s true, then it is a weakness that you should never tell other people. Do be careful.” (Claura)

“Continue the conversation another time! Let him finish so that we can get going. Arnogia is waiting.” (Sedam)

Even while showered with complaints, I’ve already resumed recharging my used spells and switching ones that I don’t think I’d need today. Originally, choosing the spells to charge for the day is supposed to be one of the challenges and pleasures of being a D&B wizard. However, all that time that I could have spent on the ‘pleasure’ part today would instead have to go towards me fixing up my appearance.

But with that said, all I really have to do is shake the dust off my robe and pat down my bedhair. The robe that I’m wearing, as well as the boots, rings, and amulet are all extremely rare magic items. If a D&B wizard saw me, his eyes would immediately go green with envy. It seems that magicians in Sedia don’t have an eye for this sort of thing, though.

“..... Do I appear imposing?” (Gio)

I stretch myself to my full height and give a shot at quoting a line from the wizard that had appeared in the classical fantasy movie Dragon Slayer.

“..... Yeaa. Sure you do.” (Sedam)

“You are the very picture of a Great Wizard.” (Claura)

Then why are you guys refusing to look me in the eye.

♥♦♣♠

The son of the Carbanera Knight Order's Grand Cross, Arnogia gil (knight) Sadishu, who is also the Company Commander of the 1st Company, turns out to be a pretty boy.

After returning to White Sword Castle with the inspection squad, he immediately hurried over to meet us.

"I see, an anki nest. Unfortunately, it seems that you are telling the truth." (Arnogia)

After listening to Sedam's account, Arnogia nods with a gloomy face.

"We shall hold a strategy meeting as soon as possible. My father—the Grand Cross, I mean—would also have to attend. Would you two, as well as Wizard-dono, be willing to help?" (Arnogia)

"Naturally." (Gio)

Did I just say "naturally" instead of "of course"? I guess I've grown just a little bit more used to the 'mask of a great wizard.' However, if I ever forget the fact that my real nature is that of a mere salaryman, it would come back to bite me later on down the line. I have read mountains of black sci-fi and fantasy novels that went down that path.

"As expected of Arnogia-dono, being able to see that we are telling the truth with but one glance. In the future, you will definitely become a very gallant Grand Cross." (Claura)

Claura is really praising Arnogia. For what it's worth, Gillion also immediately believed us about the anki appearance…… Don't tell me she's evaluating them based on their looks?

♥♦♣♠

The meeting is going to be hosted in the great reception hall of White Sword Castle.

When I think of it as a presentation, my body stiffens up.

Before this, Sedam and I have discussed what we are aiming to achieve with this presentation. At the very least, we wish for the deployment of one company from the Order. To be frank, if I freely use all the spells I have at my disposal, I can take care of the anki army and nest all by myself.

The problem lies with any possible escapees, who might attack nearby villages and people or create another nest. To prevent that from happening, a certain number of people is needed to set up an encirclement around the place (or so said Sedam). Being able to round up everyone in the Order would be best, but one company of knights and soldiers should be enough to somehow make do (or so said Sedam).

The great reception hall being on the top floor of the castle works to my favor for this presentation. The large balcony on the east side commands a great view of the surroundings around the castle.

On the floor is carpet with detailed embroidery, on the walls are paintings

depicting the feats of the Order, and on the ceiling are chandeliers and flags bearing the Order's coat of arms. Deep within the large doors lies a massive chair, which is currently occupied by an elderly knight. He must be the Grand Cross.

On his right is Arnogia, and on his left is Gillion and another male knight that I don't know. Most likely the Company Commander of the 3rd Company.

In additional, there are also 5 other top brass, several tens of knights that happen to be in the castle at the time (I see Lioria among them), and us three. This is everyone present for this strategy meeting.

"I am the Grand Cross of the Carbanera Knight Order, Amrand gal Sadishu. Adventurers, as well as…… Wizard Margils-dono. We would be thankful if you would present your valued information." (Amrand)

White hair and mustache. His dark face color indeed confirms that he is ill. However, his voice rings out powerfully.

"We are merely fulfilling our duty, Grand Cross." (Sedam)

Sedam makes a shallow bow, but his attitude is more courteous than the one he normally takes towards other knights. Beside him, Claura also makes a graceful curtsy.

"Thanks is unnecessary. Anki are an existence that threatens all mankind, after all. I have faith that the Carbanera Knight Order will come up with a most appropriate method to resolve this problem." (Gio)

I also bow in greeting. When the other party is someone who has borne the heavy burden of the Grand Cross title for so many years, acting like I'm his equal is taking a heavy drain on my spirit. I can feel my palm, the one holding the

Wizardry Staff, beginning to sweat.

“..... Leader belonging to the Lelis Adventurer Guild, Sedam-shi. Present in full detail your account of the matter at hand.” (Espine)

So intoned the tactician in a stately voice.

(T/N: No he’s not the guildmaster, he’s just a party leader, but the position of a party leader is more official and thus of some weight in this world. Detailed introduction to the Adventurer Guild will be in a later chapter, not any time soon.)

After Sedam’s accounting is my performance. But whether the meeting will proceed according to our plan…… Hoping to gather even the tiniest hint that could be of help, I secretly examine everyone else who is attending.

♥♦♣♠

“We headed towards the fort with the intention of rescuing Irudo-shi’s daughter. However, along the way, we met Great Wizard-dono, who had already rescued the daughter, and even turned the magician, who was the bandits’ leader, to stone……” (Sedam)

While Sedam continues speaking, I notice that the tactician is trying very hard to not look at me. Gillion and Lioria both look very uncomfortable. Within the eyes of all the top brass, which is composed of the Finance Minister, the Secretary, the Intelligence Head, and the Internal Affairs Head, I see a combination of doubt, curiosity, and unease.

Stay calm, me.

“..... Great Wizard-dono left us, but shortly right after, eight meteors appeared in the sky and crashed down……” (Sedam)

When Sedam got to the falling meteors, naturally the faces of the knights all turned suspicious. Even the tactician and Carbanera siblings, who have already seen my wizardry, look half torn between belief and disbelief.

The elderly Grand Cross’ face is showing no reaction at all, though. The same can almost be said for Arnogia, who has only turned slightly paler.

“..... And this is how the anki army that was heading towards Yuule was annihilated. However, it is impossible for an anki army of that scale to exist without there being a nest. It should lie somewhere within that valley. We believe this warrants immediate action.” (Sedam)

So ends Sedam’s report and advice.

“Thank you, Sedam. Everyone, your thoughts?” (Amrand)

As the elderly knight opens the floor, a heavy silence fills the hall.

“..... This is an ominous report. I believe we should first send out a scouting party to get a better grasp of the situation.”

So says the 3rd Company Commander (his name is Ord, apparently) in a hard voice while straightening his back. With his buff body and close-cropped hair, he looks the very image of a self-made military man.

“A scouting party? If we send a scouting party and they confirm that there really is an anki nest, then what do we do?” (Espine)

The tactician poses his question with a sour face. As can be expected, this causes the lined up knights to start buzzing.

“Naturally, we will smash it to bits!” (Gillion)

“Hear, hear!” (Ord)

Gillion sprays spittle with his outcry, to which Ord nods furiously.

“A scouting party, we can do. But destroying an anki nest……”

“Is there a problem, Finance Minister Igord?” (Arnogia)

Arnogia urges the plump knight to elaborate on his complaint.

“For special operations, we have to pay the knights and soldiers a special bonus. On top of which, foodstuffs, medicines, bedding, clothing, weapon maintenance, feed for the horses, fuel. If anybody gets injured, treatments costs; if anybody dies, compensation to the bereaved. In the meantime, we cannot cut down on the patrols and security in the various villages, so we’d also have to pay the knights to work overtime. To be blunt, we do not have the budget.” (Igord)

Finance Minister Igord’s face looks completely at a loss. He must be telling the truth about the Order’s finances being tight. What a harsh world this is.

Worst case, I can help out with what I have in my possession. But it’s hard to determine how involved I should get.

“That’s…… can’t we somehow work it out?” (Arnogia)

“Yea! If the Carbanera Knight Order is frugal about fighting anki, then why do we even exist?!” (Gillion)

The opinions of Arnogia, who is looking troubled, and Gillion, whose face is twisted with anger, appear to have lined up. The 3rd Company Commander, Ord, is also nodding.

The rest of the knights are anxiously watching the fate of this debate.

“In the first place, is it even true that anki have appeared? I’ve received no such report from my subordinates.”

The person who said that was a tiny old grandma with a husky voice and a razor sharp gaze who cut a conspicuous figure even among the top brass.

“There is no doubt, Intelligence Head Ileza. Where in my account was there room for doubt?” (Sedam)

I see, so she is the person in charge of the intelligence gathering.

“Sedam, are you sane? Did you eat a bad mushroom that got to your head?!” (Ileza)

“The claim that the wizard—or whatever he is—over there defeated a whole army of anki is way too unrealistic!”

After Ireza’s frank outburst, Internal Affairs Head Logik also voices his agreement. Well, it’s not like I don’t understand.

“..... As I had thought…..”

“No matter how amazing the magician, a meteor is a bit……”

When I listen to the other knights, all I hear are similar opinions.

However, I take a step forward, as if I had been waiting for this moment.

“Hou, interesting. Am I being suspected of being a con artist?” (Gio)

My line came out quite smoothly. In actuality, during my preparatory meeting with Sedam, we had predicted that the discussion would go this direction.

“N-, no, Margils-dono, by no means are we……” (Espine)

The tactician’s face quickly turns ashen as he tries to calm me down, but sorry, I’m going to have to ignore you here.

“I do not fault you all for your failure to understand. After all, ‘wizardry’ is something that has never been seen before in all Sedia. As such, allow me to demonstrate! For this is the power of my spells!” (Gio)

Uu, my back is so itchy. The fact that Arnogia and the brass and all the other knights are focused on me with their breaths held is my only saving grace. Seriously, if anyone laughs or even giggles at this moment, I know with certainty that my heart with be broken.

“By means of this spell, may 8 falling stars be summoned and descend upon the head of mine enemy. [Meteor].”

I pointed my Wizardry Staff towards the reddish-brown wilderness visible beyond the balcony as I recited the chant.

A ‘hyuu’ sound, indicative of something flying at high speed, immediately emits from above our heads. A split second later, eight meteors slam into the open land spread out before our eyes, in an enormous explosion.

Light and thunderous noise dominates the spacious hall, after which the shockwaves shake the walls and ceiling, causing them to shake off clouds of dust.

“Uwaaahhhh!”

“Hiiii-----!?”

“Fire came down from the sky?!”

“What the heck was that explosion?!”

“Uoo…… Awesome! AWESOME!!”

“.....”

The knights’ reactions are all within my expectations. Most everyone is either stock still with fear or cowering on the ground while cradling their head.

The brass are also standing dumbfounded with both eyes and mouth wide open. Actually, no, Gillion alone is, for some reason, swinging his arms around rather excitedly.

The Grand Cross and Arnogia are about the only ones who didn’t show any visible reaction.

“Apologies for riddling your parade ground with holes. If needed, bill me the repair cost later on.” (Gio)

I’m glad I asked ahead of time and learned that the areas around White Sword Castle are wilderness with nothing in them that are normally used only for military drills. But with that said, it was wrong of me to create eight gigantic holes in it. When I look at the Finance Minister’s eyes, it seems like I really might get that bill.

“..... Wha-..... wha-.....”

“Is something like this even possible……?”

“So this is wizardry……”

“The holes are real…… the land is scorched black……”

The knights are still greatly unnerved, occupied with either looking at me with dread or pressing against the balcony railing and confirming the terrible spectacle outside.

“We now understand fully. Please forgive us for any distress we might have caused, Wizard-dono. It is clear to us that your strength knows no bounds. We offer our apologies.” (Amrand)

A low and refined voice rings out, almost as if to slice through the commotion. It was the Grand Cross. It seems that he really isn’t unnerved. What an impressive man.

“I mind not, Grand Cross-dono. I, too, may also have been a slight bit immature.” (Gio)

My reply was delivered along with a cool nod. To be honest, it is only now that I've been able to make eye contact with the Grand Cross.

"Our…… Great Wizard-dono's story no longer needs any further proof, I hope?" (Sedam)

In response to Sedam's question, the knights nod absentmindedly, as if they had all just woken from a dream.

"Very well, then allow me to say it again. I have faith that the Carbanera Knight Order will come up with a most appropriate method to resolve this problem. However…… if my assistance is needed, I will gladly lend a hand." (Gio)

"Your aid would be equal to a million men. From today onwards, Great Wizard Margils-dono has become our Order's greatest and most powerful ally." (Amrand)

"Let's do it! Everyone! The Great Wizard is our ally! Victory to the White Sword! Ruin to the anki!"

"VICTORY TO THE WHITE SWORD!"

"RUIN TO THE ANKI!"

With perfect timing, Arnogia draws his sword and brandishes it aloft while shouting a battlecry.

Almost all the rest of the knights draw their swords reflexively and cheer in chorus. This pretty boy indeed seems the charismatic type. Gillion, who is beside

him, looks vexed, but still follows suit without uttering a complaint.

However.

Right before Arnogia drew his sword, his father pinching the back of his hand as a signal did not go unnoticed by me.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 18

The presentation was a success.

The Carbanera Knight Order will be deploying for a search and destroy mission of the anki nest.

The majority of the decisions were decided the same day, but the Order does not have all its members in the castle at all times, so the sortie was set for two days later in order for them to get all their forces in order. Incidentally, Sedam has become hired as a solo adventurer, and Claura will be coming along as an overseer on behalf of the Magician Guild.

“..... I don’t really mind either way, but you’ve been made into the Order’s ‘ally,’ huh. That Grand Cross is quite shrewd.” (Sedam)
“Ah, so it’s like that……” (Gio)

Sedam is taking advantage of the buzz after the meeting to come talk to me. Indeed, now that I’m an ally, I’m honor-bound to be an ally in the future. In other words, the Order has just gained me as a backer, and I have just gained a duty to support them. If the Grand Cross said what he said with all these considerations in mind, then there is nothing else I can do but to be impressed.

“..... Becoming allies with people left and right will bind you up until you cannot move, dear Great Wizard-dono.” (Claura)
As I am chewing over the sarcastic advice offered by Claura,

“May I have a bit of your time?”

I get stopped by the Grand Cross.

…… I can’t think of a good reason with which I can turn him down.

♥♦♣♠

The Grand Cross and I moved to his own office, He is currently making shil tea for me.

“For the Grand Cross to brew it himself, what an honor this is.” (Gio)

I fear that talking to this person too long will make me reveal my true colors, so I really didn’t want to talk with him at all. But now, all I can do is shore up my nerves and turn a sharp gaze towards him.

“So, what is it that you wish to talk about?” (Gio)

“As we had just decided, the command of the subjugation force will be entrusted to Arnogia. However, as can be seen, he is still young.” (Armand)
“.....” (Gio)

Opting to speak as little as possible to decrease the chances of me tripping myself up, I continue sipping my shil tea without saying anything.

“I was blessed with him quite late, so I cannot help but to be fond of him. You might think me a doting parent, but…… I wish to ask you to support him.”

(Amrand)
“..... Hmm.” (Gio)

Oi oi. Well, I’ve already been made out to be an ‘ally,’ but if someone who could drop meteors on whoever he dislikes arrives on your doorstep, the smart thing to do would indeed be to try to draw him to your side. But still.

“To be evaluated so highly is an honor. However…… is he not already being supported by the other knights?” (Gio)
“Largely, yes. However, there are those who have expressed discontent. As you may already know, the Order used to belong to the Carbanera family.” (Amrand)
He explains to me that according to the Order’s current regulations, the position of Grand Cross is determined by all the knights casting votes. In other words, there is candidate rivalry.

“So Gillion-dono is also aiming for the Grand Cross seat.” (Gio)

“From his perspective, he is but exerting a claim to what he believes to be rightfully his…… but yes.” (Amrand)
“..... Rather than ‘support my son,’ ‘I don’t want you to support Gillion’ is what I seem to be hearing……” (Gio)
Now that I’ve become an official ally of the Order, a declaration from me in support of either side would probably be of quite some weight. If I take Gillion’s side, then things could get troublesome for the Sadishu father and son.

“..... Gillion has only inherited the bad aspects of his father.” (Amrand)
“Fuumu……” (Gio)

If I am to weigh the pros and cons, supporting Arnogia would earn me trust from the Grand Cross and knights. On the other hand, Gillion and those in his faction (if he actually has one) would resent me for it. Another thing that I need to consider is that the more involved I get with the Order, the higher the possibility

that it will limit the actions I can take from here on.

“The alliance between the Order and myself is secure and unshakeable. I believe the knights themselves will elect the most appropriate person for the seat of the Grand Cross.” (Gio)
“..... Those words alone are enough to give me relief. Wizard-dono, let us continue to build a mutually beneficial relationship.” (Amrand)
Be it either Arnogia or Gillion who becomes the next Grand Cross, I will get along with the Order without showing any discrimination or favoritism. Spinning that on its head, it means that I will not support either of them, but neither will I sabotage either of them. It appears that what I meant to say was indeed properly conveyed.

♥♦♣♠

“..... It tires me out so much though……” (Gio)

While I am lying dead tired in the extravagant guest room that I had been assigned, this time it is Arnogia who calls me out. I leave my room only after firmly deciding that if he is also going to talk to me about supporting him, I will run away, even if I have to use a spell or two.

“I am terribly sorry for calling you here, Wizard-dono.” (Arnogia)

I make my way to the castle's courtyard, where Arnogia is waiting for me. For some reason, he is in full armor, and there are knights all lined up behind him. There are about 20 people in the whole group.

“I don’t mind, but…… What is your business?” (Gio)

“Actually, we wish to ask for help with our training.” (Amrand)

“Training?” (Gio)

“We heard that Wizard-dono can create monsters similar to anki, so……” (Arnogia)
Oh, he’s referring to [Create Ogre Platoon]. I’ve never showed it to him, but Mora → Sedam → Arnogia is probably how he ended up hearing about it, I expect.

Actually, this is a good opportunity for me as well. How well would these knights, who are supposed to fight against anki and undead as their job, fare against level 6 ogres? It would serve as a yardstick against which I can estimate this world’s power balance.

“I myself have never fought against a real anki. Half of the knights are also the same. Those present here are only a part of my company, but would you grant us an opportunity to conduct training against something similar to anki?” (Arnogia)
His request ended up being something much more decent and proper than I had expected. His eyes are shining with a clear sense of duty. Almost too brightly so for this dirty adult.

“If you require remuneration, we have it prepared here.” (Arnogia)

After Arnogia lowers his head, a young knight respectfully offers me a leather bag. It appears to be filled with gold coins. This young man really is diligent.

“No, I cannot accept remuneration for such an easy request. Use that money wisely for the Order’s sake.” (Gio)
“Th-, thank you very much!” (Arnogia)

Arnogia lowers his head in perfect sync with all of the knights behind him. The young knight that is holding the gold coins looks visibly relieved. If the Order is

tight on money, then Arnogia my boy, you shouldn't hand out money so freely…… Your father is worried about you, you know?

"Well then…… By means of this spell, may a platoon of 6 ogres be created from naught and be under my control for 3 full days. [Create Ogre Platoon]."

"Uoohhh……" (Knight)

"They really are anki……" (Knight)

"But the color is different." (Knight)

"To even be able to do something like this……" (Knight)

Since this is training, I summoned the ogres without weapons. However, they are almost 3m tall, and their rock-like fists are more than capable of beating any normal human to death. In comparison to my impression of real large demons, I think their combat power is about the same.

The knights are raising a great commotion. Arnogia also has his eyes wide open. While large demons have pitch black skin, these ogres are reddish-brown, and they are also not emanating searing hatred. Some of the knights are calmly pointing out the differences, but I personally would have wanted them to be a bit more calm.

"Well then, let's split into two groups and get started. I'm asking just in case, but would it be a problem if we kill them……?" (Arnogia)
"Ahh. Feel free." (Gio)

"Waaaait a second!!" (!)

An angry voice cuts in. Even without looking, I can tell it's Gillion. Lioria and his own subordinates are also with him.

"Aru! What, did you think you could steal a march on me?" (Gillion)

"Uu please stop~" (Arnogia)

"Nii-san. That's rude!" (Lioria)

Gillion is shaking Arnogia with a superior attitude, for which Lioria reproaches him. Arnogia is smiling, albeit a troubled-looking smile, but the subordinates on both sides are glaring at each other with quite threatening expressions. I gather from the faces of people of the people looking down at the courtyard from the windows above that the only people who respect Gillion are those under him.

Grand Cross, I don't think you have much to worry about, you know?

"Wizard-dono. Let me have a go first! It's fine, isn't it?!" (Gillion)

"Bu-, but we were here first……" (Arnogia)

Arnogia is apparently bad at handling Gillion (well, I think most people wouldn't use the word 'easy' to describe talking to Gillion though), judging from the timid attitude that he is taking. But the fact that he raised a rebuttal instead of stepping aside means that he's not completely overwhelmed.

"Gillion." (Gio)

"Yea, Wizard-dono?" (Gillion)

The me back in Japan was also bad with Gillion's type, and I might have been quite irritated if someone like Arnogia was my subordinate. However, a different position brings with it a different perspective. Completely unrelated to the talk about the new Grand Cross, I myself have grown to like him quite a bit.

"This time, Arnogia was here earlier. Don't worry, I can always make more ogre. Can you be patient and wait until they are done first?" (Gio)
(T/N: Lmao is this a kindergarten?!)

"U-..... Understood……" (Gio)

"I'm so sorry. And thank you truly for your generosity." (Lioria)

Even Gillion has become less quick to flare up against me after seeing [Meteor]. Rather, I seem to feel even a bit of awe from him. Lioria is also looking at me with trust-filled eyes. All because of my personal virtue——or not, and I feel pathetic admitting that.

"Without further ado, have your men get into position." (Gio)

"Acknowledged." (Arnogia)

As a fresh start, I make an exaggerated announcement, then raise my staff aloft.

"All hands! Battle readiness! 1st and 2nd platoons, defensive ranks! 3rd platoon, attack readiness at the flank! 4th platoon, reserve ranks!" (Arnogia)
"YES, SIR!" (Knights)

Arnogia is shouting instructions in a surprisingly sharp voice. The 20 or so knights form ranks in no time at all.

10 are standing shoulder to shoulder as a wall, 5 are on the right side, and 5 are lined up at the back. Arnogia himself is mixed in with the back line.

“Ogres, attack the knights. But under no circumstances are any of them to die.”

“GuruaaaAA!” (Ogre)

“GAAAA!” (Ogre)

I’m surprised at how easily a commanding tone came out. Well, irrelevant to what tone I used, the ogres obey my orders, rushing at the knight ranks while raising fierce roars.

“Shields, brace!” (Arnogia)

At Arnogia’s command, the whole front line of shields decorated with crests goes up. The knights’ perfect movements and perfect stances give the shields an air of immutability akin to that of a solid steel wall…… But.

“Garuu!” (Ogre)

“Guwah!?” (Knight)

The wall built of plate armor and shields and the knights’ own bodies sways severely. As can be expected, none of the knights were blown away by the first hit, but now the line has fallen into total disarray, what with some still reeling from the impact, some dazedly tottering in place, and some staggering to regain balance.

“Kuh…… Just hold on!” (Knight)

“Guruuuh! Gaaaah!” (Ogre)

The knights near the middle of the line try to help their allies by shouting encouragement, but in the face of the 6 ogres’ violent barrage of punches, there was very little effect.

“.....!” (Arnogia)

Unsure of what order to give next, Arnogia has fallen silent.

“Guwah!” (Knight)

In the meantime, the punches that fall like rain never slowed. Eventually, a knight failed to catch a punch properly, and is sent flying together with his shield. In succession, two, then three more crumple to the ground, unable to withstand anymore. Then more follow suit.

“.....?! 4th platoon, to the front! 3rd platoon, circle around!” (Arnogia)
“Gyah!?” (Knight)

“Uwah uwahhhh?!” (Knight)

Despite having stiffened up, Arnogia refuses to give up and issues more commands. However, the combat difference is just too great. Even while the hole in the defensive line is being plugged up by the reserves, knights are sent flying one after the other.

“Take this!” (Knight)

“Gahh!” (Ogre)

The 5 knights who had circled around swing down their swords on the ogres' flanks and backs. Several of their attacks successfully tear through ogre flesh and deal damage, but the counterattack punches sink them one by one.

"Kuh…… circle up! Form a ring! Victory to the White Sword!" (Arnogia)

"Ohhh, they sure are working hard." (Gio)

"..... Ar! Don't give up! Aim for the eyes!" (Lioria)

Watching Arnogia calling to the few knights still standing and standing back to back with each other in an outward facing circle, I involuntarily muttered to myself. Lioria is shouting encouragement. Gillion is……

"Tsk. What is he doing. If it was me……" (Gillion)

…… getting irritated. However, these two who are verbally expressing their feelings are still on the better side. The other knights and castle residents that are looking on can't even speak up. I suppose there's no helping it, with how similar the ogres are to actual anki. Actually wait a second, isn't this kind of bad?

"..... Stop right there!" (Gio)

Arnogia had been doing not too badly, dodging several punches and sliding several more off his shield, but his sword strikes were merely bouncing off the ogres' muscles. An instant before an outstretched ogre arm was about to grab his head, I called out. The loyal ogres stop all motion at exactly that moment.

"..... Uuuu……" (Arnogia)

Arnogia is groaning with an ashen face.

“..... Everyone, you have done well! Take the rest of today off to rest up. Up to the day of the sortie, let us continue polishing our fighting techniques! Don’t worry, today was merely training. Real achievements are earned on the real battlefield!” (Arnogia)
Him saying such things while going around and waking and helping up the fallen knights seriously impresses me. Even more so due to the expression on his own face betraying the fact that he himself cannot accept such platitudes.

“I, I’m so sorry……” (Knight)

“The next time, for sure……” (Knight)

“Hah, what a miserable display! I’ll show you all how to do things. Just watch!” (Gillion)
At the voice of Gillion, who is incapable of reading the atmosphere, the troop morale that had recovered slightly dropped back down to rock bottom.

♥♦♣♠

“Doryahh! How’s this?!” (Gillion)

The way that Gillion, the 2nd Company Commander, fights is the complete opposite of Arnogia.

At the start of the fight, the first thing he did was leave his subordinates behind and charge straight in, all by himself.

Turns out his enormous amount of self-confidence is not entirely unfounded. Squarely catching a punch with his shield, he then deflects the force back to the ogre. His follow-up attacks are aimed accurately at weak points. For someone with such a large body, he fights in a surprisingly clever way. With his precise movements, he is able to skillfully handle the concentrated attacks.

“Hah! Sei!” (Lioria)

As for Lioria, she is faring even better than Gillion.

Running around at a speed almost unbelievable for someone wearing armor, she is actively throwing the ogres into disarray and sinking her sword into heels and knees and any other exposed weak points.

“Ohhh!” (Spectators)

The spectators that are watching with bated breath are all astir. One ogre that has been receiving Lioria’s attacks finally falls to its knees.

Despite being fellow humans, how can there be such a large difference? Actually, no, this is this world’s reality. Be it experience or talent or some other cause, differences the size of the gap between the heavens and the earth can and do exist. This is truly a world of heroes.

“Good going, Lio! Ugoh!?” (Gillion)

“Tsk! Let go!” (Lioria)

Sadly, it appears that they, too, have reached their limits.

Gillion, who stopped moving for a split second, got kicked square in the back, and has fallen over. Lioria, who was growing out of breath, had her arm grabbed and her sword taken away.

And I don't know if I should say 'as expected,' but every other member of the 2nd company had already been beaten to the ground ages ago.

"Stop right there, stop right there!" (Gio)

I hurriedly command the ogres to stop moving.

"Shit! Let me go one more round, Wizard-dono!" (Gillion)

"Eat this! Let go!!" (Lioria)

Gillion is still shouting energetically, while Lioria is still attacking the ogre that froze with her arm still in its grasp. I am impressed, in a different way than I was by Arnogia. However……

"Why are you dragging morale down even before the sortie?!" (Claura)

I would prefer it if you thanked me instead for learning 'this' before the sortie.

After all, it is something that I have a right to know. As an 'ally.' Yep.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 19

I am back in the guest room.

“That’s, yea, you were in the wrong.” (Sedam)

“Seriously. And now Arnogia-sama’s face is all smashed up. I can’t believe you.” (Claura)

(T/N: His figurative face, not physical.)

Sedam’s and Claura’s opinions are unanimous.

“Wait wait wait, if killing anki is supposed to be the Order’s raison d'être, then……” (Gio)

“If you wanted to simulate real combat, you should have made it 2 vs 20 instead of 6 vs 20.” (Sedam)

…… Ahhh, I see. So these are the market prices for the fighting that goes on in this world.

“6 knights can easily handle 20 small demons. It’s just…… fundamentally, anki are existences that should be engaged with whole armies.” (Sedam)

True to that, the Carbanera Knight Order is deploying two whole companies for this operation, which adds up to more than 400 people altogether.

“Speaking of which, how strong are adventurers then? Sedam, if it’s your party, can you guys take down one large demon?” (Gio)

In response to my question, Sedam pulls a difficult face.

“When Claura is in the party, we can defeat several large demons. When she isn’t, we would struggle quite a bit against a single one.” (Sedam)

“Since I can use even upper rank magic.” (Claura)

So even Sedam’s party, which looked quite experienced to me, would have trouble against a single ogre—large demon—huh.

“Then how about those humans called heroes?” (Gio)

“If we’re talking about those specialized against anki, then there is the warrior called ‘Anki Killer’ Leid. He can probably handle 5 or 6 large demons at the same time. Might even be able to take on a rock demon.” (Sedam)

“As for magicians, Pelishura-shi, 1st Seat of the Lusick Magician Guild, can kill rock demons. It is rumored that she can use the super rank magic Ice Coffin.” (Claura)

(T/N: The -shi suffix for Pelishura is not the usual one used for equals, but the one for masters or teachers.)

“While we’re on this topic, the strongest adventurer party in Sedia is ‘Cabran of the Purgatory Flames,’ the leader of which is a magician. At that class, they can fight against several rock demons at the same time and win.” (Sedam)

“Well, they’re based in the capital of Shulendal, so we can’t count on them this time around.” (Claura)

Anki Killer, magician guild 1st Seat, and even Purgatory Flames, huh. If this was a TRPG, they would be important NPCs that I’d definitely meet some time in the future……

“Mumu.” (Gio)

I slap my own cheeks a few times to dispel the unnecessary thoughts. This is reality.

“This bastard! Doryahhh!” (Gillion)

“Aniki, behind you! Tah!” (Lioria)

The Carbanera siblings’ shouts are currently reverberating from the courtyard.

Arnogia, as well as the knights under him, have also begged with me to allow them to continue training.

Right now, the people that I should rely on, as well as protect, are those three and Sedam and Claura.

♥♦♣♠

“Sei!” (Lioria)

“Gugyaah!?” (Ogre)

To everyone’s surprise, two days before the sortie, Lioria managed to kill one ogre.

There was some coordinating with Gillion and her subordinates, and the ogre was bare-handed, but she is growing at a speed that can be seen by the naked eye.

“Wizard-dono! It’s all thanks to you! Thank you so much!” (Lioria)

Despite being covered with ogre blood from head to toe, her pure smile was truly beautiful.

“Damn you, Lio! Don’t you get cocky! Since I’m gonna catch up with you!” (Gillion)

“Gillion-dono, you should probably work more on commanding your subordinates……” (Gio)

Gillion has also shown some growth, and Arnogia is freezing up less often while commanding.

There is no doubt that these three have what it takes to become heroes one day.

Which is all the more why they should never be sacrificed.

♥♦♣♠

All 430 members of the 1st and 2nd Companies, as well as 20 attendants, eventually gathered in full.

With all of us on horseback, the Grand Cross saw us off.

“..... May the fortunes of war blow your way. Victory to the White Sword! Ruin to the anki!” (Amrand)

“VICTORY TO THE WHITE SWORD! RUIN TO THE ANKI!!” (Knights)

But well, despite the gallant start of the campaign, it's not like we went straight off to fight anki. After all, we didn’t even know the exact location of the nest.

As such, the subjugation force first headed for the fort where Jyagul used to be at. A base is necessary for setting up a defensive line to prevent runaway anki from getting close to the highway or nearby settlements.

Furthermore, messengers were also sent ahead of us to Yuule and Lelis to warn them.

Because my [Meteor] destroyed the straight mountain road, we had to take a narrow, twisty animal track. Although it was only a few days, laying eyes again on the fort that was my starting point gave me a slight twinge of nostalgia.

“What on earth……” (Knight)

However, the sight of the fort being on top of the cliff that I’d created with my [Renovation] apparently did not instill the same sentiments in the knights.

♥♦♣♠

After the fort was returned to its original position, the transporting of the supplies into the fort began. The fort was way too small to hold the almost 500 people of the expedition. However, after converting some nearby land into a campsite, the whole place started to look a lot more like a proper base. Incidentally, about all the plunder that the mountain bandits had stockpiled, I secured what used to belong to Irudo, then allowed the knights to confiscate all the rest. The fact that they did so for the sake of alleviating the cost of this expedition almost brought tears to my eyes.

“Alright, we shall now confirm our strategy.” (Espine)

After gathering all key persons into the command room, the strategist Espine is now reviewing our strategy.

“With this fort as the point of reference, the 1st Company will set up a cordon in the north, and the 2nd Company will do the same in the south. The duration of the operation has been estimated to be 3 days, but there is a possibility that it will last longer than that, so assign your men with that in mind. In that time, the Elite Squad, with Sedam-dono, Claura-dono, and Margils-dono as the core, will go up the valley, locate the nest, and destroy it. The Elite Squad will then return immediately and help eliminate the leftover anki caught by the cordons.” (Espine)

In other words, this is a strategy that relies 100% on Sedam’s searching abilities and my firepower. At the time of the first meeting, I had only intended to serve as a support role. However, after seeing the training, I had to change my thinking, and pressed the knights into altering the plan. I had no choice, after being shown so clearly the difference in power between anki and humans. When I thought of my position, I had some reservations, but this is the only method I could think of to make sure no one dies.

“About the target, the anki nest itself, I will do the explaining.” (!)

The middle-aged man serving as the Vice Commander of the 1st Company picks up where Espine leaves off. If I remember correctly, his name is Gunnah. He is an old-timer who was part of the force that had destroyed the anki nest 10 years ago.

“An anki nest is different from the nests of normal wild beasts or monsters at the conceptual level. Its appearance is a pitch black sphere, but we fear that it does not actually have a defined form.” (Gunnah)

“Umu……” (Gio)

I’ve heard this before at the last strategy meeting, but an anki [nest] is not an actual [habitat].

“What I saw with my own two eyes 10 years ago was the size of a cow. And anki were being born from within it.” (Gunnah)

No matter how many times I hear it, it still sounds disgusting. I now understand full well that this world’s anki cannot be explained with the knowledge that I’d gleaned from games and novels.

“Just to confirm, that nest can indeed be destroyed by swords and magic, yes?” (Gio)

“That is indeed so, Wizard-dono.” (Gunnah)

Well, whatever the method, as long as it can be damaged with physical attacks and magic, then it should be destructible.

“By the way, is the Elite Squad only us three?” (Sedam)

So asks Sedam suddenly. Oh right, we haven't talked about that yet.

"Please take me along as well." (Arnogia)

"Don't be stupid! Of course it's already decided that I'm going too!" (Gillion)

"O-, Of course I'm also going!" (Lioria)

Arnogia and the Carbanera siblings all reacted loudly to Sedam's request for confirmation. Well, it's not like I didn't foresee this. To be honest, if the location of the nest was known, I would have liked to go just by myself……

"Both of you are Company Commanders! Please think about your positions!"

Gunnah berates the three of them. That scar on his face gives his words all the intensity they need.

"B-, But……" (Arnogia)

"Forget it, forget it! I am a Carbanera! The anki must die at my hands!" (Gillion)

"Aniki, shut up! I'm also a Carbanera!" (Lioria)

Well, when you think about it, both next-generation Grand Cross candidates going to the most dangerous place on the battlefield is indeed quite nonsensical. But I don't want to step any further into the Order's internal matters, so I'll just keep silent.

"I personally would recommend Gillion-dono, Lioria-dono, and Gunnah-dono

accompanying Wizard-dono…… I can fill in for the command of the 2nd Company.” (Espine)

“Ohhh, is that so! You say good things every once in a while, Strategist!” (Gillion)

“Yes, please!” (Lioria)

The Carbanera siblings become all smiles after hearing Espine’s suggestion. Arnogia lightly bites his lip. Chances are, the strategist’s opinion is also the Grand Cross’, but is it really alright to let the Carbanera siblings take so much credit? But if his suggestion was based purely on fighting prowess, then I guess I can understand.

“In that case, we shall then be relying on you three.” (Espine)

“Yeah! Leave it all to me, Wizard-dono!” (Gillion)

“I swear I will definitely ensure your safety!” (Lioria)

To be honest, I don’t foresee needing their help with anything though.

♥♦♣♠

The next day.

Us ‘Elite Squad’ are currently standing inside the valley where fragments of charred anki remains are scattered all around. What we are now about to do is go up this valley in search of the anki nest.

“From here on, we may be ambushed by anki at any given moment. Never let your guard down, understood?”

“Roger.”

Sedam and Gunnah start discussing what formation to take and who to take which position, but in the meantime, I concentrate and look for a certain spell in the Inner World. After confirming that everyone is within range, I release the power of the level 9 spell that I’d found.

“By means of this spell, I, as well as all allies within a 3m radius, shall have our very existences transferred to an alternate plane while retaining freedom of movement. [Move Outer Plane].” (Gio)

“ “?!” ”

Due to the effects of the spell, all 6 of our bodies have been transferred to an alternate plane that overlaps the physical world. From our point of view, it is as if the world around us was suddenly hidden behind one of those fish tanks at an aquarium that makes the other side look like it’s swaying and tinted blue. We should have completely disappeared from the physical world without leaving even a trace. Of course, now that we are in an alternate plane, it is impossible for us to be detected or attacked by anki or whatever else. As long as we remain in this plane, we cannot affect anything in the physical world, but the best part about this spell is that we can still move about while in here. In other words, for the next 6 hours, we can search wherever and however much we want without having to fear being discovered.

“Seriously, anything goes with you, doesn't it.” (Sedam)

After hearing my explanation, Sedam shrugs his shoulders.

The siblings’ stares, his filled with awe and hers filled with admiration, both prick me, but I’ve already decided to not hold back.

As of now, I am going to get serious.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 20

Chapter 20: Infiltration

Level 9 spell [Move Outer Plane].

This spell transfers the bodies of a maximum of 7 people, including the caster, to an alternate plane. Anyone in this alternate plane is completely cut off from anything going on in the physical world. It is impossible to be detected or attacked from the physical world, so this is pretty much the ultimate defensive spell. Furthermore, all obstacles in the physical world can be passed through as if they don't even exist. For the duration of 6 hours, it is possible to transverse between the real and alternate planes as often as desired, the only condition being that the followers must remain within a 3m radius from the caster.

(T/N: I'm surprised the Sedia side understands spatial theory lol.)

In other words, this spell is just way too perfect for covert operations.

"That sounds truly all-powerful……" (Gillion)

"W-, Wizard-dono, are you a god?" (Gunnah)

Both Gillion and Gunnah have turned pale while commenting so.

“Are you an envoy from the guardian deity of winter, Ashuginea-sama?” (Lioria)

Oy, Lioria-san over there, please don’t kneel.

“..... N-, No I’m not a god.” (Gio)

I don’t think I can be faulted for being flustered at being treated as a god. It’s true that with my level, I’m more than qualified in D&B to undertake an ‘attaining godhood’ kind of quest, but I haven’t. That’s definitely not the way that I’ll explain it to them, but I can see in their eyes that I’m going to need to do some sort of explaining to convince them that I’m not a god.

“Anyways…… I don’t even know any gods, and neither am I interested to. If my wizardry seems like the power of a god to you…… then it must be due to you having too much religious piety.” (Gio)

Even I don’t know what I’m saying. Behind the three knights who, for some incomprehensible reason, look deeply impressed, Sedam and Claura are looking at me with eyes tearing up with repressed laughter. Those two are my only saving grace, really.

In actuality, I am far from a god. Although the power of the spells at my disposal are indeed powerful, D&B wizards have mountains of weaknesses. One of those is that there is a limit to the number of spells that I can have charged. For example, from among the spell list that I’ve charged up for today, this is my current level 9 loadout:

[Spell Name] Useable Number / Charged Number

[Meteor] 2 / 2

[Complete Healing] 1 / 1
[Time Stop] 1 / 1

[Create All Monster] 1 / 1
[Word of Death] 1 / 1

[Chaotic Wall] 1 / 1
[Move Outer Plane] 0 / 1

[Invincible] 0 / 1

It's like that.

The maximum number of spells that can be charged goes up according to level. In my case, I can keep 9 spells charged on each floor. Spells whose Useable Number has dropped to 0 cannot be used anymore for the day (I already cast [Invincible] when we departed from the fort). Of course, I've also carefully selected 9 spells each from all eight other floors.

If possible, I really wanted to charge one more [Complete Healing], and I really want [Shapeshift] too for its versatility. But well, this is one of the limits of a D&B wizard.

"Enough of that. Ladies and gentlemen, should we be off?" (Gio)

My spells don't last forever either.

♥♦♣♠

With Sedam in the head, we walked along the valley floor.

The valley turned out to be more complicated and deeper than we'd expected, with the main path branching off several times. Each time we came upon a fork, Sedam had to search the surroundings for traces of the army's passage. There were a lot of rocks and debris in our way, but such obstacles did not even slow us down, as we were in the alternate plane. Thanks to that, it took us only two hours of walking to discover the anki base.

"There is a rock demon……" (Gillion)

"Before that, what is that?" (Lioria)

We are in the deepest part of the valley. In an open space the size of a baseball court that is encircled by sheer cliffs, there is an elephant…… no, it is a rock demon 4 to 5m tall, surrounded by several tens of small demons. It appears that the rock demon is being served lunch, as the small demons are carrying several pig-like creatures toward it. Of course, none of them sense us, since we're still in the alternate plane. But rather than that, what first caught my and Claura's attention is the gigantic door set into one of the cliffsides. Is it at least 10m in height? At that size, even rock demons can easily pass through.

"What do you mean 'what is it.' It's a door, duh." (Gillion)

"Yea no duh. I meant, why is there a door here?" (Lioria)

"That might have been made by the anki themselves." (Gunnah)

Gunnah provides a proper answer to the sibling manzai skit. Sedam is nodding in agreement, so he must be right. It's true that the construction itself appears quite simplistic, but the patterns and decorations that look like avant-garde art are ominous, to say the least.

“But wasn’t it only recently that anki began appearing around here? Did they really have that much time to make something like this?”

“Whichever way you look at it, it doesn’t seem like something slapped together within 2 or 3 days. This must have taken …… 10 years …… or maybe even more.”

Wait, wasn’t it 10 years ago that the last anki nest was found in Liuus? If this dates before that, then it must be from the great battle 150 years ago.

“Doesn’t matter either way. For now, what we have to do is kill that rock demon and charge through that door, right?” (Gillion)

“That is indeed correct, but leave it to me.” (Gio)

“..... Alright, fine.” (Gillion)

Oooo, I thought he’d just charge in regardless, but I guess even Gillion is growing.

“But before I begin, let’s take a look beyond that door.” (Gio)

I take out a single scroll. Claura tries to peek at it while feigning disinterest.

“My, even wizardry has scrolls? Wait a second, isn’t it completely blank?” (Claura)

“It’s blank right now, but…… Well, just keep watching.”

I spread out the blank scroll on the ground.

“Ah, something’s becoming visible.”

“..... This, is this a map?”

Exactly. This is a magic item called a Mapping Scroll. It’s normally just white paper, but once spread open, it will automatically turn into a map of the nearby area.

Seeing as how the title [Dungeons & Braves] is mostly about dungeon exploration, such an item is practically antithetical to the game itself. However, most dungeons above level 30 are either in other dimensions or are encased in lead, which wizardry cannot pass through, so Mapping Scrolls don’t work. Conversely, it is an item used by high level characters who can’t be bothered to explore normal caves and ruins step by step.

“As I had expected, there is an underground passage behind that door.” (Sedam)

After closely gazing at the map, that is the analysis that Sedam comes up with.

“Considering that the nest also spawns rock demons, we should reach it by going down a passage large enough for them to pass through…… This must be where it is.” (Sedam)

The place that he is pointing to is a large room situated at the edge of the map, which means it’s in the deepest part of the cave system. It is indeed connected to the huge door by the widest tunnel on the map.

“It seems like there are a lot of branches and small rooms also. Ones that can serve as escape routes are……” (Claura)

“All the others look too small for large demons, much less rock demons, to pass

through.” (Sedam)

It is fortunate that we got ahold of this information now. If there are several large escape routes, then we’d have to go seal those off beforehand.

“Well then, let’s infiltrate from the front entrance.” (Gio)

The reason is not because the door is meaningless to us in the alternate plane, but because we might lose our way passing through rock for a long period of time without any visibility. There’s no point to any of this if we don’t reach our goal.

♥♦♣♠

“We would need to return to the physical world for me to cast a few more spells. While I do so, please protect me.” (Gio)

“Oh? Ohhh! Leave it to me, Wizard-dono!” (Gillion)

“I will definitely protect you!” (Lioria)

The siblings suddenly burst into smiles, and everyone forms a ring around me.

“I have a protective magic called «Wind Wall». It is capable of blocking even attacks from a rock demon for a while.” (Claura)

So murmurs Claura while standing up and preparing her long staff. Didn’t you tell me that magic can only be used to attack…… in other words, it can be used for fighting purposes in the general meaning, I suppose.

“Transferring to the physical world…… now.” (Gio)

Of course, we’re not in the middle of the open area. Our bodies are currently hidden in the shade of some rocks near the entrance. Right after the transfer, the rotten smell emanated by the anki that had been shut out up to now assaults our noses.

The smell really bothers me, but it’s still bearable in comparison to the time when my shoulder was stabbed through by an arrow of ice. Without wasting any time, my Inner World self immediately dives down to the 6th floor.

“By means of this spell, may death be granted to all living creatures under level 32 within 9 meters each way. [Death Gaze].” (Gio)

“ “.....” ”

Although the chanting is finished, there is no dramatic change to the scene of the rock demon grasping a pig with both hands and biting off its abdomen. I can feel the knights holding their breaths.

We wait for one more second.

“Gua……” (Rock Demon)

The rock demon’s body immediately goes completely slack, and the pig falls from its hands. It falls to its knees, then topples over in slow motion. Looking closely, I can see the small demons around it also falling like flies.

“?!”

“Gyah!”

“Giruru! Giuh!”

The rock demon is lying completely motionless on the ground. This spell kills off all living creatures under level 32 without giving them any time at all to resist. In the D&B game system, this spell has a chance of failing if the targets have any resistance against wizardry, so I am relieved to see that this was not the case here.

“They died just like that……?”

“The rock demon…… just by looking at it……”

It wasn’t actually my gaze that did the killing, but I have no time to explain everything in detail. The small demons that are running around raising a commotion at the sudden occurrence have apparently spotted us.

“GYAHH! GAHHH!”

“GyaaUUUuu!”

The small demons rush at us, brandishing swords and spears. The killing intent and hatred-filled glares that almost causes my back to be drenched with cold sweat are as chilling as always.

While I’ve already started chanting my next spell, I hear the ‘pishi’ sound of a bow from behind my back. That must have been Sedam shooting an arrow.

“Gugah!?”

An arrow plants itself in the chest of the small demon in the lead, bowling him over backwards.

“Fire Feather!” (Claura)

Several tens of feathers made of fire appear from Claura’s outstretched staff and bury themselves into small demons one after the other.

“Alright, bring it on!” (Gillion)

“I won’t let you lay a single finger on Wizard-dono!” (Lioria)

The Carbanera siblings and Vice Commander Gunnah all raise their shields in front of me and brace themselves, but I finish my chant before any of the small demons reach them.

“By means of this spell, may all dead under level 36 become zombies under my control with their will intact. [Control Dead].”

Due to my spell, a false breath of life blows into the fallen rock demon (and some of the small demons), causing them to stand up again as zombies.

“Guruoooo……”

[Death Gaze] is not a spell that kills through external damage, so it did not look strange at all when the rock demon stood back up.

However, every time he swings his enormous arms, the ones that he’s blowing away is not us, but the small demons trying to attack us.

“GyaAH! Gugyah!”

“GUOOoooh!”

The hell-like scene of a zombified rock demon and several zombified small demons fighting against other small demons unfolds before our eyes.

It seems that the normal small demons are prioritizing killing us humans instead of taking care of their crazed allies, as they make another push towards us. From behind them, the rock demon zombie is either punting their exposed backs or outright stomping on them. Those out of its reach are being picked off by Sedam and Claura.

A few minutes later, all of the sane (?) anki have been annihilated. The small demon zombies are also down, but the rock demon zombie is still in good health.

“By means of this spell, may a single target of my choosing be reduced to dust. [Destruction].” (Gio)

As a result of this spell, the tall, majestic doors crumble to dust with a loud roar. We would have had no trouble passing through in the alternate plane, but since I went to the trouble of creating a rock demon zombie, I want to put it to work.

“Go. Massacre all anki inside.” (Gio)

“Guruuu……”

After receiving my command, the zombie rock demon makes its way through the destroyed door and into the cave with a dull gait.

The knights no longer have any words left and are merely staring with their mouths wide open.

…… Ah.

Couldn’t I just have the rock demon zombie open the door instead of pulverizing it?

“Ahem.” (Gio)

Sedam’s and Claura’s gazes tell me that they both have some words for me, but I gloss over it by pretending to clear my throat.

“Shall we also head inside?” (Gio)

I am earnestly praying that I look full of self-confidence right now.

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 21

Chapter 21: [Nest]

…… Yea, I really shouldn't have destroyed the door. If the large and rock demons inside all stampede this way, it would be a catastrophe.

I don't think my decision to go full power is a mistake, but I cannot deny that I did get a bit too staff (?) happy.

But well, holes can simply be filled. In place of the pulverized door, I cast [Wall of Stone] to create a stone wall that seals off this underground passage.

Anki can't get through this solid wall, but we can simply phase through with the effects of [Move Outer Plane], so there's no problem.

"Oh sh-, the rock demon is being done in!" (Gillion)

Large demons are jumping onto our rock demon zombie from the left and right walls and thrusting with their swords, while countless numbers of small demons are swarming around its feet.

“GyaAU!”

The rock demon zombie grabs the large demon riding on its neck and dashes it against the wall. That one is definitely dead now, but several more jump to take its place, while others still on the floor swing greatswords and clubs against the rock demon’s ankles.

“GuuRUoooo……”

Rock demons originally move quite sluggishly, but that got even worse after becoming a zombie. The small demons aside, the large demons and their coordination make for very incompatible opponents. I had hoped that the rock demon would decrease the number of anki in the underground passage even more, but I guess not all things go so well in life.

“What’ll we do? Leave it and continue on?” (Sedam)

So asks Sedam calmly. Of course, that is what I intend. But I can only hope that the knights haven’t been accumulating stress after coming this far without getting much action.

“.....” (Gio)

“Your orders, Wizard-dono?” (Gunnah)

The 3 knights have sword and shield up at the ready, and haven’t once broken the defensive circle formation around me ever since we came in. Gillion’s expression looks a little sour, but his eyes tell me that he is still serious and focused.

“..... Remain vigilant like you are doing. We’re heading deeper in.” (Gio)

It seems that I have been making light of their professionalism a little. I give Gillion a pat on the shoulder, slightly apologetically.

“Wh-, What is it?” (Gillion)

“Nah, not much. I’m relying on you, Gillion-dono.” (Gio)

♥♦♣♠

What with their main force suddenly turning into a zombie and rampaging about, the door to their base disappearing and the entrance being sealed off by a stone wall, even anki would start to panic. We continue on uneventfully, even while small and large demons rush all about us every which way.

“..... So even anki have some degree of civilization.” (Claura)

“If you want to call that ‘civilization,’ then yea I suppose.” (Sedam)

Along the way, we see what looks to be creepy paintings (which I can only register as colorful swirls) and game boards, prompting Claura to make such an observation. In response, Sedam points toward a place where what looks like pieces for the game are made. The materials of the pieces are clearly human bones.

“Shit.” (Gillion)

“Oh gods, please grant mercy……” (Lioria)

“Ugu……” (Gunnah)

Other than those, we also see a few ‘works of art’ made by anki. I thought the materials for some of those looked familiar, and then I realized that they are the mountain bandits that used to be with Jyagul.

The intensity of the hatred that anki bear towards humans is expressed so eloquently on those ‘art pieces’ that I feel cold to the pit of my stomach. I am also assaulted by a powerful desire to vomit, but I try my utmost to suppress the backflow of my stomach’s contents.

“All these anki, making light of humans. I’ll crush every last one of them. For sure.” (Gillion)

I can hear Lioria’s and Claura’s sharp intake of air mixed in with Gillion’s mutter. The fire in his voice saves my chilled heart from breaking.

♥♦♣♠

“We need to take the right here.” (Sedam)

“Mu…… I almost walked past it. Thanks.” (Gio)

The widest passage shown on the Mapping Scroll actually is interspersed with corners, slopes, and stairs.

It is one thing to know the layout of the passages and where we want to go, but the spooky passages are lit intermittently by torches and light sources placed only at relatively important positions, and we are literally walking amongst anki dripping with killing intent. I almost make a wrong turn several times, but Sedam

is always on point with his precise instructions.

I had originally considered doing this alone in order to decrease the possibility of anyone dying, but now…… At the moment, I'm beginning to appreciate having such reliable allies beside me.

♥♦♣♠

"Beyond here is our goal." (Sedam)

So declares Sedam assertively.

After going straight down the last stretch of the wide passageway, we emerge in an expansive space that makes me think of a dome stadium. The perimeter is closed in by rock walls almost 20 meters in height. Our passage opens up roughly halfway up the wall, and there are broad stone steps descending all the way to the bottom of the cavern.

"We found it quicker than I'd expected……!?!?" (Gio)

Despite being safe in the alternate plane, even I stopped mid-sentence and reflexively held my breath.

The reason is because I laid eyes on the [anki nest] in the middle of the cavern.

"How terribly repulsive……"

"What the hell……"

Cluster of pitch black spheres…… is the only way I can describe it.

When I take a closer look, I also notice several silhouettes that are most likely small demons.

There are 4 or 5 spheres 4 or 5m high—just enough for a rock demon to pass through—stacked haphazardly on top of each other. When I heard about it at the debriefing, I'd imagined something that gave off a more 'alive' kind of feeling, but I'm getting a shockingly mechanical impression.

Furthermore—and this might sound ironic coming from me—that thing is not of this world.

Be it either instinct or some latent ability, the very moment we laid eyes on it, all of us were convinced so. In comparison to that [nest], even anki seem to belong more in this world.

"Is something…… coming out?"

The surface of one of the spheres on the ground suddenly bulges outwards. At first, it looks like a stick has been thrust out, but the end splits into 5, identifying it as a hand. In succession, a rough shoulder, distorted head, then a thick torso emerges from the surface of the sphere. The creature(?)'s efforts to rip apart the thin, gum-like membrane covering its entire body reminds me of a cheap variety show entertainer…… that's the most apt analogy I can come up with.

Eventually, the membrane is finally ripped and smoothly falls to the ground, revealing a rock demon. The torn membrane is quickly sucked back into the sphere.

"..... So that is an [anki nest]....." (Sedam)

Even Sedam's voice is quivering.

♥♦♣♠

“What I saw 10 years ago was just a single one of those spheres.” (Gunnah)

Gunnah’s fierce face is currently stiff with anxiety.

“Now we know why this nest has gone undiscovered for so long. It is because it’s been purposefully hidden away. Long enough for it to spawn more than enough anki.”

“Are you saying that they can think up tactics and strategies?”

“We already know that anki fight under a commander and employ at least rudimentary military tactics, but……”

While listening to the serious discussion between the knights and adventurers, I think of how to destroy the [nest].

As expected, [Meteor] is the best option.

Though it is a spell that calls down a meteor from the sky, us being inside a dungeon shouldn’t be much of a problem.

The actual problem is that, just like before, I need to leave the alternate plane to cast spells. All would be well if the [nest] just sits there without doing anything, but things could get dicey if it actually does possess some method of attack. One choice is for me to leave the alternate plane by myself, but……

(T/N: Go guess in the comments what method of attack these pitch black

spheres would have :p)

“Rejected.” (Claura)

“We can’t come back from the alternate plane if you die, right?” (Sedam)

“That is not even funny!” (Gillion)

“If it ever comes to it, I’ll serve as Wizard-dono’s shield!” (Lioria)

“If I ever become a burden, please abandon me immediately.” (Gunnah)

I am grateful for their feelings. To be honest, I don’t actually have that much confidence nor self-assurance. All I have is fear. Fear that my mistake in judgment would cause them harm.

“Have you not gotten a bit too cocky?” (Claura)

“..... Mu.” (Gio)

“Wh-..... Claura!” (Lioria)

Claura’s cold voice and stare dispels the anxiety in my chest. I’m sorry, Lioria, but no matter how much I may act like a Great Wizard, I am merely a former salaryman.

Which is why I need nakama.

I think of all the spells that I have left in my Archive and all the magic items I have on me, then brainstorm all possible developments. For example, what if those

spheres rush us? What if we get attacked from behind by anki?

I rack my mind as hard as I can, and finally decide on a plan of action, which I immediately tell them.

“I want to destroy those... things... over there. Will you all lend me your aid?” (Gio)

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Chapter 22: 10 Second Interval

Right now, we're behind the last corner in the passage that leads to the dome.

We haven't left the alternate plane, but it's impossible to settle down in a place where the [nest] is still in line of sight, so we retreated a bit.

"In order to use [Meteor], I need to be in that dome." (Gio)

[Meteor] should still be useable in a dungeon. But with that said, if I cast it from within the passage here, chances are it's going to hit a wall and explode before reaching the intended target.

"So, we'll go down into the dome, come out of the alternate plane, then you'll use your wizardry?" (Sedam)

"Exactly. For the 10 seconds I'll need to do the chanting, I leave my protection to all of you." (Gio)

"Won't such a large explosion in that space also blow us apart?" (Claura)

Despite being able to come in and out of the alternate plane as much as we want, the transfer would take another 10 seconds. So what Claura pointed out is indeed very appropriate.

“I’ll use a special spell for that. It is……” (Gio)

♥♦♣♠

Several minutes later.

“GuRUaaah!”

“GaaAAh!”

Large, reddish-brown forms are emerging from the passage and charging into the cavern. They are ogres that I’d made with [Create Ogre Platoon]. I had the same spell charged twice, so there are 12 of them in total.

“GuRUaah!”

The ogres rush down the stone steps, then spread out to attack the [nest], the freshly spawned rock demon, and the other anki.

When I made them, I’d already used [Wall of Iron] to block off the back of the passage, thus eliminating the worry of the other anki joining as reinforcements.

Of course, I don’t actually expect the ogres to destroy the [nest]. I’m sorry, but they're just the distraction.

The rock demon's reaction to the surprise attack is very dull. The ogres' weapons sink again and again into its rock-colored skin. But despite that, it seems that the ogres can't seem to deal a fatal blow. There are some of them that are already being flung off by the rock demon's swinging arms.

The anki in the vicinity of the [nest] are apparently different species from normal small demons. Some of them have reverse-jointed legs that give them jumping power similar to springs, which they are using to slash at the ogres. When I take a better look, I notice that their arms have also been altered into sharp sickle-shaped blades. True to their appearance, they are apparently called 'sickle demons.'

The sickle demons' attack power is quite a sight to behold. Although not to the point of one-hit-one-kill, fresh ogre blood is spurting out and splashing everywhere.

"GuRUuu!"

Furthermore, arrows of fire suddenly appear next to some anki that had remained immobile near the [nest] and fly into the ogres.

"GuAh!?"

These fire arrows are much more powerful than Jyagul's ice arrow had been. They pierce through the breastplates of several ogres and light them up like a torch.

"Those are magic demons. 10 years ago, we confirmed only 1 of them." (Gunnah)

Vice-Commander Gunnah quickly gives us a short explanation. They are taller than small demons, and each holds a staff. I see, so there are also magician-type

anki. Which means there are most likely knight-type and cleric-type ones too.

If things continue as they are, then it'll only be a matter of time before all 12 ogres are wiped out.

But contrary to how things seem to be going……

"GyaRUuuuuu!"

Reinforcements are at hand! The large red bulk with folded wings lying in wait inside the passage where we're at is actually a red dragon that I'd created with the level 9 spell [Create All Monster]. Measuring 6 meters head to tail, and with a wingspan of twice that number, it's actually just a Small one, but it is an honest-to-goodness level 12 monster.

The red dragon heads straight for the rock demon and starts gouging its durable skin with teeth and claw.

Naturally, the magic demons and other anki shift their focus onto the dragon, but they are unable to deal any significant damage.

"Awesome…… At this rate, won't they finish the job all by themselves?"

"I doubt that. At most, they can only serve as a diversion." (Gio)

At the moment, the [nest] has yet to react in any way. However, my instinct as a gamer is shouting at me that that thing must have some last boss tier move. While it is still unresponsive despite being threatened by ogres and even a dragon, we have to hit it with our greatest firepower.

"Just like we discussed. We can't mess this up!" (Gio)

“Who do you think you’re talking to?” (Claura)

“Of course! Leave it to me!” (Gillion)

Then everyone nods wordlessly.

♥♦♣♠

“We got out!” (Gio)

“Told you so.” (Sedam)

While the fierce battle between the ogre-dragon allied force and the anki raged on, we made our way to the floor of the dome. Of course, we didn’t charge straight ahead like idiots. Rather, we fully utilized the characteristics of [Move Outer Plane] by circling to the opposite side of the space while staying within the rock walls.

Despite the trip being only several tens of meters, we were able to move forward with our sight completely sealed solely thanks to Sedam and his reliable sense of direction.

“ShaAAAah!”

“GoruuuUu!”

The dragon has the rock demon pinned down and is bathing it in its fiery breath. Its swinging tail and powerful breath has already mowed down or incinerated many of the sickle and magic demons. However, there is still no change in the all-

important [nest].

Having gotten within a hundred meters of the [nest], the sense of wrongness that we felt from the start is now much, much stronger.

♥♦♣♠

Our resolve is made. Thus, we shift back to the physical world.

“Gugyaahh!”

“GyuuOOOO!”

At once, the monsters’ roars and bellows and screams jump up a decibel and wash over us.

“Let’s show them the power of a Carbanera!” (Gillion)

“We’re counting on you, Wizard-dono!” (Gunnah)

Gillion, Lioria, and Vice-Commander Gunnah raise their shields and stand in front of me. Sedam and Claura take my left and right. I’ve already cast [Physical Boost] and]Enchant] on them and their weapons ahead of time. Although the duration of the buffs is short, their attack and defensive power should both be greatly enhanced.

But of course, all of that is only meant as insurance.

“By means of this spell……” (Gio)

It takes me 10 seconds to chant a spell.

Before the eyes of my Inner World self, the Door of Wizardry appears.

“KIIII!”

“ARURURU!”

Several sickle demons and magic demons have noticed us. Damn, how sharp-sighted of them. The magic demons turn their staves toward us, and the sickle demons give the blades on their arms a good glare before leaping over.

“That all you got?!” (Gillion)

“Something of this level!” (Lioria)

The knights’ shields fully block the falling arrows of fire.

8 seconds left.

The twanging of a bowstring rings out so beautifully that I half expected all the demons to be exorcised. An arrow strikes between the eyes of each of the two sickle demons that are jumping at me. Having lost their balance, they plunge to the ground.

(Culture Note: This is about the exorcism thing (feel free to skip this C/N if you’re not interested in Japanese culture). The term used by the author here is 弓鳴り

(yumi nari), but the more commonly used names are 鳴弦 (meigen) or 弦打 (tsuru uchi). This is an exorcism technique where twanging a bow without an arrow would exorcise all demons that hear the sound. The clarity and beauty of the sound reflects the purity of the heart of the exorcist, and affects the power of the technique. Some believe that this tradition is based on the 破魔弓 (hama yumi), but that's another story and you can Wikipedia that yourself :D).

7 seconds left.

The Inner World me passes through the Door of Wizardry and descends the cold and dark spiral staircase.

".....?!"

In front of the real world me, the [nest] opens its eye.

The [nest] is composed of several black spheres stacked up. The sphere at the top is the one that is expressing an [eye]. Rather than an actual biological eyeball, it's just a pattern or shape made of white fiber. However, all of us know instinctively that that is an [eye].

6 seconds left.

The figure of the red dragon splits horizontally.

It is the work of a single tentacle moving at super high speed. The tentacle, which is as thick as a light pole, had emerged from the surface of a sphere almost instantaneously. After dropping only slightly in momentum after bisecting a dragon, the tentacle swings around towards us, travelling parallel to the ground.

“«WIND WALL»!”

Along with Claura’s fighting spirit-filled voice, a wall of raging winds rises up between us and the approaching tentacle.

“DON’T YOU LOOK DOWN ON US!”

“UUUOOOOUUU!”

The tentacle pierces through the raging winds.

The Carbanera siblings brace their shields and stop the tentacle head on…… or not. Even they know that such a feat is currently beyond them.

5 seconds left.

““HAAH!””

The moment the tentacle makes contact with their shields, the siblings both tilt their shields and push upward in an exemplary display of synchronicity. With their muscle strength enhanced by [Physical Boost] and their shields coated in defensive magic due to [Enchant], they manage to redirect the tentacle’s trajectory a slight bit upwards.

Buoo~

The tentacle barely passes above our heads, flying fast enough to cause the Doppler effect and leaving behind incredible wind pressure in its wake.

4 seconds left.

The Inner World me places a hand on that book, releasing the power of chaos contained within.

“Guwaah!?”

“Kyah!”

“Kuh!”

Gillion and Lioria are rolling on the floor. Right before their bodies leave the area that I’d indicated, Vice-Commander Gunnah exerts all his strength to pull them back.

3 seconds left.

The [nest]’s giant eye blinks once.

The tentacle that has completed one revolution around the black spheres accelerates once again.

2 seconds left.

"WIND WALL!"

Claura's hoarse voice rings out, but no wall of wind appears.

1 second left.

"[Time Stop]."

After I utter the keyword, everything freezes.

♥♦♣♠

"Fuuu……" (Gio)

Due to the level 9 spell [Time Stop], the time of everything in this world, with myself as the sole exception, has been stopped.

The shouts and bellows and screams from an instant ago have all been cut short. Nothing and nobody moves — not the knights, not the adventurers, not the

anki, and most important of all, not the [nest].

The time that this spell stops time for (weird though this concept sounds) is a random number between 20 to 50 seconds. As the caster cannot choose the duration, if my luck is terrible today, I have only bought myself 20 seconds.

But that is enough.

Without any hesitation, I use two more spells.

♥♦♣♠

Time resumes flowing.

The spells that I'd finished chanting immediately take effect.

The first is [Wall of Force]. The 6 of us are surrounded by a dome-shaped force field.

The second is [Meteor]. To be exact, it's not the version with the 8 smaller rocks that I'd been using up to now—it's the version with one gigantic meteoroid and one target.

If I had to express it in terms of sound, I think 'kyuun' would be closest.

The meteoroid that appeared near the ceiling of the dome plunges into the [nest] at a speed almost faster than our eyes can perceive.

Struck directly in its [eye], the [nest] distorts in a ‘squished’ kind of way, then scatters into a thousand pieces.

‘Little people watching a gigantic balloon filled with mud water bursting apart’ is the best way that I can describe it. Fragments of the nest covers everything in sight. Hot on the heels of the fragments, waves of fire and shockwaves dyes the entire world pure white.

“.....!”

Somebody is shouting something. It might even be me.

The spell [Wall of Force] has the highest durability out of all spells in D&B (after all, the rulebook does describe it as ‘impossible to destroy by any physical means’). Completely unaffected by the explosion from the meteor, it is still properly protecting us. The rock walls and ceiling are beginning to crumble, but we don’t have to worry about any of that at all.

Rather than that, it is the scene and thunderous roars that caused our legs to give out.

Finally noticing a pressure on my neck and body, I turn to see Claura clinging to me.

Looking around with a sigh, I note that everyone is safe, aside from being on the ground. Gillion, however, has a grotesquely squashed arm.

“Aniki!”

Lioria rushes over to her brother, but I still can’t move.

It is because I am thinking about what I saw in that moment before the [nest] was blown to bits.

The force of the explosion had blown outwards, exposing what lay hidden within the pitch black spheres.

Framed by the light of the flames, it was a closed door as black as darkness itself. That thing, it is the same. It is made of the exact same essence.

——As my Door of Wizardry, that is.

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Escaping was easy.

The convenient plot development where the anki all die or turn to ash because their [nest] got destroyed didn't happen, but with [Move Outer Plane], we just strolled out of there without the anki finding us.

There were still a lot of anki in those underground passages, so I didn't forget to use the remaining [Meteor] charge to collapse the entire cave system. And speaking of not forgetting, I also didn't forget to heal Gillion's hand with [Complete Recovery].

The something that I saw the moment the [nest] was destroyed that looks so similar to my Door of Wizardry.

Are anki born from someone's wizardry? But in the first place, wizardry and the Door and all those are merely the products of our imaginations. Is 'He' or The Guardian related to a transcendental existence that affects both Sedia and my old world? If so, then it would mean that I am not a mere bystander. It is clear to me that even when I lay down plans for the future unrelated to anki, I must always take notice of them.

♥♦♣♠

When we returned to the fort and reported all the details, the Carbanera knights were greatly excited (of course, I kept quiet about the Door).

Under Arnogia's precise instructions, the knights gradually tightened the encirclement, hunting down all of the remaining anki.

The fine tooth comb of the fort's vicinity and forested areas ended up taking 5 whole days, but the anki clean up was a success. Of course, we can't say with 100% certainty that none of them got away, so there will be knights stationed at the fort for a while longer as a precaution. Arnogia assertively said "as this task is the duty of the Carbanera Knight Order, we will accomplish it, even if I have to dip into the Sadishu family's personal finances."

Furthermore, after the other knights also heard what happened, their treatment of me went from 'obligatory' to 'respectful,' to the degree where they assigned me the best room in the fort, better than even Arnogia's own (well, it's the one that used to be Jyagul's).

♥♦♣♠

Six days after the destruction of the [nest], we found ourselves in Yuule.

Leaving behind Vice-Commander Gunnah and his subordinates, who had been

tasked with the continued vigilance at the fort, we were on our way back to White Sword Castle.

News of the appearance of anki, deployment of the Carbanera Order, and the crushing of the [nest] had already been spread far and wide throughout the village by the time we got there, so they threw us a huge feast.

An enormous bonfire was lit in the middle of the village square, and the village head unlocked all the warehouses and supplied tons of wine and food.

The men, be they knight or villager or dwarf, all brandished tankards and drank themselves silly, while all the girls dressed up and danced. The chorus of the villagers' simple farming songs, the dwarves' rowdy songs, and the youngsters' songs of love and romance all melded together in merriness.

While all the merrymaking was going on, I was in an isolated part of town.

To be more specific, I was in the dining room of the mansion that belongs to the local feudal lord, Baron Carbanera.

In the first place, it was not good that the villagers now know about my meteors on top of me clearing the bandits out of the fort.

The amount of gratitude and words of praise that they heaped onto me was incomparable to the time when I saved Mora. However, the villagers' attitudes had also grown stiffer than before. When the proprietress of Pavilion of the Iron Pot Knight spilled wine on my robe, her face turned pure white and she started

apologizing to me while crying. Of course, I didn't get angry, and somehow managed to calm her down, but I can't forget how the faces of everyone present had stiffened up with fear.

While I may have gained the status of a Great Wizard, I have also equally become an object of fear in people's eyes.

As this is the result of a decision that I myself had made, I have no right to say anything about it, but neither could I help being slightly shocked at it all. It was then that Gillion and Lioria called out to me.

♥♦♣♠

"Magician, I heard that you have been of great help to Gillion and Lioria. You have my thanks."

The very neurotic-sounding voice that is addressing me belongs to the current head of the Carbanera family, Gilrand Carbanera. He is the man who caused the Order to suffer enormous losses due to his reckless strategies 15 years ago and was thus forced off the position of Grand Cross. Upon closer inspection, his handsome face seems more like Lioria's than Gillion's.

Exquisite fare on an exquisite table. Formal-looking furniture and decor. By all appearances, it is a gorgeous dinner, but my mood is at rock bottom.

At the table is Gilrand, Gillion, Lioria, and myself. Just us. I fully understand why Sedam and Claura so coldly declined Gillion's invitation.

“Ahem, I’m actually a Wizard……”

“Of course, there is no doubt at all in my mind that it was Gillion who performed the most meritorious feats in this subjugation campaign! As expected of my son.”

“Y-, yes…… it was all thanks to the aid of Wiz-..... Margils-dono.”

It is like words don’t even reach him. Back when I was a salaryman in Japan (though it was less than 10 days ago), I did meet people like this every once in a while. Hmm, didn’t I also think the exact same thing when I met Gillion for the first time?

“Lioria, you have also done well helping your brother. I give you my praise.”

“T-..... Thank you very much, Father!”

“With this, those Sadishu backstabbers and those in the Order must have gotten at least a glimpse of the most fitting blood for Grand Cross of the Carbanera Knight Order!”

If these two were raised by that father, then I understand how Gillion ended up the way he is. More rather, it seems that they turned rather rather well, considering.

The two of them do look aware that their father is not quite there. However, their pleased smiles at being praised, despite their father’s state, will forever remain in my heart.

♥♦♣♠

The next day, we returned to White Sword Castle.

After the conferral of honors and the victory banquet and all the associated ceremonies, I can finally take a breather.

I am in the same guest room as before.

“Haa~ What am I to do next……” (Gio)

“What do you mean by ‘what to do next’?” (Sedam)

As usual, Sedam and Claura are both with me. Sedam did say that after all this, he plans on returning to Lelis with his party.

“You will be coming with me to turn yourself in…… I mean, make a call at the Lelis Magician Guild.” (Claura)

I guess it’s already been decided in her mind that I’ll be taken to the Lelis Magician Guild. More like, she already told me from the start that she’s here to keep an eye on me. Well, I myself also have a need to know more about magic.

“There are other options.” (Gio)

“Such as?” (Sedam)

I also have a pressing need to do more research on anki. And before even that, I need to make a copy of my spellbook. I am tired of constantly worrying about

losing the one and only copy that is currently in my sling bag. And if possible, I also want to find a house where I can just live out a comfortable retirement.

As I fold my fingers counting off the paths of action that I can take, Sedam is ready with advice as usual.

“If you want to research anki, there are several options there too. Firstly, there is the Great Library in Shulendal. You could also try the Magician Guild Headquarters. If I pull a few of my connections in the Adventurer and Merchant guilds, we could get some amount of information from various places. Lastly, and this might be a bit out there, but it might also be a good idea to investigate the Rastland Great Fortress.” (Sedam)

“Rastland Great Fortress? Isn’t that currently a citadel filled with undead!” (Claura)

The citadel that Baron Gilrand, the man who invited me to dinner last night, tried and failed to recapture. If I remember correctly, it was constructed for the sake of fighting against anki, so there might be documents inside containing information or research. Hmm, the exploration of a citadel that has turned into a haunt for undead, huh. What a Dungeons & Braves set up.

“I think I’ll leave the dungeons for a future time.”

I mean, even the name makes it sound like the last dungeon in a game. It wouldn't be too late to get to it only after exhausting all my other choices. At the very least, I’ve got to assemble a party of allies stronger than this time’s. Anyways, I don’t want to go someplace like that all by myself.

“Incidentally, what did you mean by ‘comfortable retirement’? After all you’ve done, do you seriously think that you can ever withdraw from the world?” (Claura)

Oh my god, is it really too late……?

♥♦♣♠

While talking about all this, I received a summons from the Grand Cross.

While feeling a wave of deja vu wash over me, I am once again sitting across from his solemn face in his private quarters.

“Once again, allow me to offer you thanks for your assistance.”

“Mind it not. My actions were only natural, both for an ally and for a wizard.”

As before, I am enjoying shil tea brewed by the Grand Cross’ own hand while we exchange inoffensive pleasantries.

“I heard that Gillion and Lioria also had some share of the action. Incidentally, hasn’t Gillion changed a bit after accompanying you on this mission?”

“..... A bit, perhaps.”

This might not be a welcome thing to hear for the man hoping to make his own son succeed his own position, but still.

“Under his father’s influence, his personality is to take everything by force. But after bearing witness to your almost absurd amount of power it seems that his

thinking has changed at least a little. At this rate, he just might gain the calmness that he needs to become a proper knight."

"Is that not a good thing for the Order?"

"Undoubtedly. I wish for Arnogia to win the seat of Grand Cross fair and square, after all."

In other words, if the current Gillion is to fight against Arnogia, internal strife might set in. As I fixedly stare at the face of the knight with decades behind him, I cannot help but to sigh in admiration. Rather than chasing away Gillion, who is more like a beast than a knight, helping him mature in order to prevent infighting, and only then having the two of them compete. I see, this man is not just a schemer or a doting parent…… he is a true 'knight.'

"If you had only agreed to support Arnogia at the start, I wouldn't have to take such roundabout measures, you know."

The old knight's tone seems to be implying that my interpretation is still too shallow. This grandpa, he's definitely going to live a very long life.

"By the way."

The Grand Cross puts down his cup. Are we getting to the main topic now?

"Actually, I have one more request to ask of you. It's about that fort……"

"....."

I nod knowledgeably, but I haven't the faintest idea what he's getting at.

“As you already well know, that place used to be the base of some bandits. In actuality, we were the ones who built that fort several decades ago, for peacekeeping purposes.”

The decrease in anki sightings and dwindling of the Order’s numbers eventually caused the fort to be abandoned. Right now, Vice-Commander Gunnah and a few knights are stationed there due to recent circumstances, but the Order is struggling to meet the extra costs incurred by maintaining this arrangement.

Mumu. Is he about to say what I think he is about to say?

“Of course, this is only after we have become absolutely certain that there are no more leftover anki. But well, in short, we wish to offer you the fort to become your residence.”

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 24

“We wish to offer you the fort to become your residence.”

So announced the old knight.

Mere ten days ago, I was transferred to this world, and woke up in the dungeons of that very fort. Then I passed that first night there together with Mora, after chasing off all the mountain bandits. Following the destruction of the anki nest 5 days ago, I once again stayed 5 more days there, together with the knights and adventurers. It has become the place that has left the deepest impression on me. The layout of the place easily comes to my mind.

But seriously, that place? As my home?

Back when I was a salaryman, I lived in an apartment in a 30-year-old building and yearned for a standalone house of my own.

“I-, I’m afraid I don’t see where this is coming from.” (Gio)

“This is quite embarrassing for me, but……” (Amrand)

My shock must be visible on my face, because the Grand Cross is smiling wryly.

“The mountain bandits that were based there previously were the relatively quieter type. It seems that their policy was changed after that magician became their head, but…… Up till then, their M.O. had been to demand passage fees narrowly within what merchants and travellers could bear.”

In other words, the Order had purposely let those bandits be, as subjugating them would possibly merely open up the spot for an even more vicious bandit group to take over.

That really is quite embarrassing. But well, I get the world can’t always be perfect.

“So you wish for me to also maintain local public order while living there?”

“I don’t think the word ‘maintain’ would be sufficient. Public order will be revived. After all, I doubt anyone will commit any acts of evil right under the nose of a Great Wizard.”

That is a really cool way of putting it, but it doesn’t change the fact that he wants to use me. Public order of that area is supposed to be under the Order’s responsibility.

“Pardon me for saying this, but I fail to see much merit for me in this deal.”

“We have no intention of burdening you with any duties. So long as you own the place, you won’t even have to actually live there.”

So, ‘we’ll give you the fort but not the authority over the area,’ is it? The demerits are starting to pile up now.

But well, I'm not actually opposed to lending a hand in preventing bandits from running rampant.

"This might just be my own arbitrary misunderstanding, but don't famed magicians—and wizards—live in secluded towers?"

He's got a point. Great magicians and sages from fantasy novels that I've read do not live inside cities or towns. Considering the commotion at Yuule and the villagers' attitude towards me, it might not be a good idea for me to live within a human settlement.

"And in actuality, do you not also wish to be free of the burden of miscellaneous tasks and find a place where you can live quietly?"

Now that he brings it up, that property might not be so bad as a mancave. Forget standalone house with a garden, this property is a fortress surrounded by a forest. That first night, I was so surprised by how quiet it was, and the star-studded sky was amazing too.

"According to reports, the place is almost entirely undamaged. Furthermore, it has already been outfitted with all the facilities necessary for comfortable living."

That's true, there weren't any particular difficulties when I stayed with the knights for those 5 days. The bath that I used was basically a barrel filled with bathwater at the top of the main tower, but the view of the majestic mountains and forests was breathtaking.

…… While I'm thinking about all this, I remember that I also need a place to safely store all the treasure that I've been lugging around in my sling bag, as well as a place where I can safely create some magic items.

Oh right. And I still need to make a copy of my spellbook.

“This might not be sufficient as thanks for aiding us with the anki subjugation, but please think of it as saving me face.”

“Well, if you put it that way, then I cannot decline it.”

Umu. I’ve made the right choice.

♥♦♣♠

“Hah?? You, are you an idiot??” (Claura)

After hearing my report upon my return, Claura rains freezing water over my parade. How rude.

“My decision was reached after very careful consideration. People won’t come close, it’s quiet, and it’s safe. What problem could there be?” (Gio)

“That is not what I’m talking about! What happened to your promise to go with me to Lelis and turn yourself over to the Magician Guild?!” (Claura)

Claura’s eyebrows immediately shoot up and she reaches over to pinch my earlobe again, but I successfully evade her with a beautiful sidestep.

“Come on, I seriously need an environment where I can quietly work on things. I’ll definitely visit the Magician Guild, but can’t it just wait for a bit?”

I am not just lost in the idea of a mancave of my own.

When I think of the order of priority of all the things that I have to do, for humane reasons, gathering information about anki is at the top of the list. Next, for practical reasons, is the replicating of my spellbook. If the appearance of anki is connected to The Guardian, then that is also my problem.

As for the spellbook, now that I'm going to be living in this world, I can't very well carry it on my person 24/7. At the very least I need a place to safely store it, and a copy in case of theft or damage. In order to make replicates, a certain amount of materials, budget, and workspace will be necessary.

Going by priority, investigating anki is at the top, but practically speaking, I won't be able to move without worry until I have that second spellbook. In other words, accepting the fort means I have gained both a place for safekeeping as well as a workspace.

After I finish thoroughly and calmly explaining all that, Claura reluctantly nods, albeit still looking extremely displeased.

"In that case, then when will you be able to start for Lelis?" (Claura)

"The anti-anki measures still have to be dismantled, so the fort will be ceded to me 5 days later. I have to put down my things, after which……"

"In. That. Case! I will only wait for 7 more days! Then you must go to Lelis, you hear me?" (Claura)

"This is you two's new marriage home, right? I don't think it a bad idea to spend a bit more time checking it out, y'know?" (Sedam)

Having been listening to our exchange with an amused smile, Sedam teases us. This is the first time that I've heard him crack this kind of joke. How dangerous—if this was modern Japan, he would have earned himself a sexual harassment

complaint with that.

“It is because you are not a magician that you can make stupid jokes about this. You have no idea how much of an obstacle—actually, ‘threat’ would be more accurate—how much of a threat his very existence poses to all magicians.” (Claura)

“I myself also have an interest in magicians. Don’t worry, I won’t make you wait longer than that.” (Gio)

I cannot possibly replicate the spellbook in a single day, and I also have to gather the materials I need, so I might as well first drop by Lelis once.

“And of course, I’ll go to the fort with you.” (Claura)

“Haah?” (Gio)

“What is with that face?! It is the very epitome of rudeness!” (Claura)

Having fantasized of a refined bachelor lifestyle, I couldn’t help but to let a stupefied cry escape my throat.

♥♦♣♠

The next 5 days, I continued to lodge at the White Sword Castle guest room.

The days were quite idyllic, composed of strolling through Yuule, borrowing books from the library and reading them, and helping the Carbanera siblings with their training. The villagers and knights generally live a simple and laidback lifestyle. However, the looks of fearful awe from the villagers never abated.

Rather than being hated, I feel that I'm being respected more than anything else, but…… it made me think that I really shouldn't live in any human settlements.

Including Sedam, all the adventurers, except for Claura, left White Sword Castle for Lelis on the third day.

"After all, I need to report about you to the Adventurer Guild. Being the Great Wizard and great hero that you are."

"Please go easy on me." (Gio)

While exchanging a firm handshake with me, so said Sedam. No man, I'm serious, don't lay it on too thick, alright?!

Arnogia and Vice-Commander Gunnah also headed for Lelis, apparently having been tasked with reporting to the Council of Lelis about this incident.

♥♦♣♠

As for me, I am now riding a spelt phantom horse down the mountain trail that leads to the fort.

The roads were indeed destroyed by my meteors, but because of the frequent traffic between White Sword Castle and the fort in the recent while, a new, and even shorter, route has been properly established. Therefore, our journey is quite comfortable.

"..... Only two nights, you hear me? We're really going to Lelis after staying here two nights, right?"

“I already told you that’s what we’ll do…… You sure are a distrustful person, aren’t you.”

Incidentally, she doesn’t have a horse, so she is currently sitting behind me on the phantom horse.

“When there are no anki and no bandits around, riding a horse through all this nature sure feels good.”

The slightly stronger sunlight of early summer, all the greenery around, and a refreshing breeze. Though noisy, I do have a beautiful lady behind me on my horse. If the me back in Japan knew about my past few days, he would grind his teeth in envy, definitely.

“Ohh, I see it. My Jiiteias Castle.”

The fort that has been named with the name of Gio’s birth country (or so goes the setting) has come into view.

Up until yesterday, the knights had still been using the place. As they had cleaned and put everything in order before handing the place over to me, I’m getting a more extravagant and solid impression than when I had first laid eyes on it.

In the afternoons, I can go into the untouched forest and forage for acorns and wild vegetables. The mountain streams must be great for fishing, and I’m sure I’ll catch some wild animals too if I lay down some traps. Land is one thing that I now have an abundance of, so cultivating a vegetable garden might also be good.

And when it rains, I can go to the top floor of the main tower and read a book. This is what they mean by ‘seikou udoku,’ isn’t it?

(T/N: Seikou udoku: ‘working in the field in fine weather and reading at home in rainy weather, living in quiet retirement dividing time between work and intellectual pursuits’ ~Akebi dictionary)

When night falls, the quietness I will be able to experience will be a far cry from the boisterousness of towns.
In the evenings, I can make dinner out of what I gathered in the afternoon. I don’t have a lot of confidence in my cooking skills, but well, they call it ‘a guy’s cooking’ for a reason, right?

I can take super laidback baths while enjoying a real starry sky that I can never see in modern Japan. Although the bath is just a barrel, I plan on eventually digging a hotspring.

“Ohhhh~”

Truly the envy of all middle-aged men in the world. A quiet life of leisure with dignity. The ultimate slow life!

My goals of replicating my spellbook and gathering information on anki remain unchanged, and I will rush over if there is news of anki or another [nest] appearing, but well……

I don’t think I’ll be punished just for pursuing a little bit of personal enjoyment in my off time, right?

Because I let the phantom horse proceed at a leisurely pace, it is nearly dusk when we reach the fort, despite having left White Sword Castle early morning.

Deciding to have dinner first, I have Claura wait in the reception hall while I head to the kitchen in the residence building.

Though limited, I do have magic items that can make food. However, such unconventional measures are what they would call uncouth.

“Alright. First, let’s get a fire started in this stove.”

I take out a flintstone from my sling bag.

“? I just have to strike this place really hard, right?”

It is a tool that I have used countless times in TRPGs, but of course, it is my first time using the real thing to start a fire. But well, these past few days I’ve seen adventurers and knights doing it when we camped out, so I’m sure I can manage somehow.

“OUCH!”

I totally smashed the flintstone onto a fingernail with full force.

“Uooo…… it hurts……”

The pain in my finger might have successfully returned me to my senses.

I look around the kitchen, and realize that none of the appliances I got used to seeing in Japan are present—no fridge, no gas stove, no rice cooker.

“Eh? Wait, am I actually in big trouble right now?”

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 25

"Mumu…… why's it not working?"

I'm striking the flintstones against each other with all I have, but the firework-like sparks are showing absolutely no sign of catching onto the firewood.

"Wait, no. I'm not supposed to directly set fire to firewood, but something easier to burn, right? Where are the newspapers, newspapers~"

Yep, of course there aren't any around.

"..... Uun. I guess when compared to Japan, this is really inconvenient."

After living a few decades by myself, I thought myself sufficiently proficient at cooking and housework, but clearly that was only in the environment of modern Japan. And come to think of it, previously my meals and baths and other housework have all been taken care of by Mora or the servants of the knights.

In this world, there are no supermarkets nor convenience stores where fresh vegetables and meats are all lined up. This is all the more true for this fort, which doesn't even have any other humans nearby.

Right now, I am so ashamed of the me that had forgotten all this and gotten conceited by himself.

Alright, let's calm down a bit and mentally review this fort's layout. The facilities that I can confirm at the moment are as follows.

Main Tower
Basement 1: Storeroom, Armory, Wine Cellar
1st Floor: Hall (audience hall cum dining hall)
2nd Floor: Command Room, Reference Room, Guest Room
3rd Floor: Bedroom, Library, Treasure Vault
Rooftop: Lookout

Residence Hall (2-story building)
Single room for knights: 5 rooms
Small room for attendants: 5 rooms
Large room for soldiers: 2 rooms
Room for servants: 3 rooms
Kitchen
Small Dining Room
Food Storage, Storeroom (Underground)
Sleeping Equipment & Clothes Storage
Dungeon (next to the hall)

Interior Courtyard
Stable, Livestock Pen, Chicken Coop
Well (laundry area)
Small Workshop

Castle Gate & Defense Towers

Back when the knights were stationed here, their numbers were clearly over the capacity. By my estimates, this fort should be able to hold about 50 people in all, with that number inclusive of knights and soldiers and servants.

Can a single person take care of all the cleaning and repairs for a place of this scale? The answer is ‘no.’ Well, I guess I have the option of spending several months building up a force of servants with my wizardry.

That is strange, does it mean that those magicians and sages living alone in their towers did all their housework and laundry by themselves?

…… This might be a bit late to say, but it may have been rash of me to accept the fort.

♥♦♣♠

“..... But before anything else, we need to do something about tonight’s dinner……”

I’ve reflected, but the situation remains unchanged. My gaze sweeps over the kitchen that now looks several degrees more dreary than when I’d entered (which is of course just my imagination).

Inside my sling I find, according to Gio’s character sheet, ration food such as dried meat, dried fruits, beans, and bread. For starters, I take them all out and line them up on the preparation table.

“What am I supposed to do with any of this……?”

Aside from cutting and roasting the meat, no other cooking method comes to mind. But I can’t get a fire started. I have spells that can give me lots of fire, enough to blow up more than just this kitchen, but unfortunately my spellbook does not have a convenient spell for getting mere firewood to burn.

Otherwise, all I can do is just cut everything up and eat them as is……

Seriously, what the heck. Have I ever felt this exhausted since coming to this world? How pathetic I’ve become.

“I thought this would be the case.”

Standing in the doorway of the kitchen is Claura, with a face of wry exasperation. Not that I don’t understand her reaction.

“Hahaha…… it appears that a mancave might be a bit too high level for me……”

“Cave? .....I thought that there was no way you knew how to cook, and it turns out I’m right.”

“How embarrassing…… But now that things have become like this, I’m thankful that you've come along.”

“? What do you mean?”

“I mean like how women are more reliable in matters like this. Like I’m very sorry, but can you please make something for us?”

“Eh?”

“Eh?”

♥♦♣♠

In conclusion, we somehow made do with my magic item for that day’s dinner.

When we returned to the main tower’s hall, I spread a tablecloth on top of the table. After chanting “Dinner, 2 portions, warm,” the magic item Dinner Cloth displayed its ability.

First, 2 sets of plates, bowls, glasses, knives, forks, and spoons appeared on top of the cloth. Next, food appears: thick steak and accompanying salad on the plates, corn soup in the bowls, and wine in the glasses.

The fireplace was started with a small fire arrow courtesy of Claura.

“.....Is this an item made with wizardry?”

“Umu……”

It is an item that creates food for maximum 4 people 3 times a day. This time, I really didn’t want to resort to using this item, but such pride means absolutely nothing in the face of hunger. We sat across each other and just thankfully ate the food.

♥♦♣♠

“This is good enough to almost make me doubt it was made by a magic item.”

“Thanks, I guess.”

She offers her evaluation while classily eating the steak with her knife and fork. But apparently displeased with my vague response, her shapely eyebrows shoot up.

“With magic, we can make a similar item, I’ll have you know. But still…… why did you not just use this item in the first place?”

I already know that though.

“..... Men are creatures who must at times do pointless things……”

“It was almost the most pointless way I’ve wasted time.”

“..... Yes, you’re right. When we still have to start looking into anki as soon as possible too.”

Claura did bear with my incomprehensible selfishness, so I can afford to listen to a complaint or two from her. But what she says next was completely unexpected.

“With that said, seeing you in such a state also gives me reassurance.”

“Reassurance?”

Tilting her glass back and sipping some of the wine, Claura shows me a slightly gentle smile.

“Although it was us who told you to be more hero-like…… From when we first met you till now, you've been too hero-like.”

“..... What do you mean?”

“Like a proper hero, you’ve only done the right thing, that’s what I mean. But actions that are too righteous can end up hurting people too…… both yourself and others.”

A threat against humans the scale of anki exists, while I possess the power to oppose it. Which is why I did what I did……

“Anyway, your actions this time were truly pointless and meaningless. That, in this world, is what we call ‘being human’.”

“.....”

Oi oi, to think that I am learning something from a life lesson being given to me by a girl more than 20 years younger than myself……

For a second, I nearly tear up.

“It might sound presumptuous for the daughter of an earl to offer you advice,

but if you wish to keep this castle in a state conducive for people to live in, I believe you will need a minimum of 3 servants and a steward. When we reach Lelis, shall we spend some time looking?”

To receive not just a life lesson, but also life planning advice……

“But of course, before any of that, you will be appearing before the Magician Guild, understood?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

(T/N: All along, when Claura mentions bringing Gio to the Magician Guild, she uses the word 出頭, which can mean either “show up / appear” or “turn yourself in (ie. to the police)”. I believe her word choice is on purpose.)

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 26

(Author's Note: The exposition is done, so I will now reveal the protagonist's abilities. Aside from what is listed below, the protagonist will not suddenly have any other spells or items.

This data is merely the contents of the protagonist's TRPG character sheet. In this world, concepts and terms such as 'status' and 'ability points' and 'hitpoints' will not come up, except in a very small number of exceptions.)

Name: Gio Margils
Profession: Wizard
Stats:

Strength 10
Intelligence 18
Wisdom 13
Dexterity 10
Constitution 16
Charm 13

Level: 36
Hitpoints: 66

Experience Points: 4,350,000 (Max)
Money: 3,000,000+gp (inside the Infinity Bag)
Skills:

Magic Item Creation: Super Rank
Potion Creation: Higher Rank
Construct Monster Creation: Super Rank
Quarterstaff: Mid Rank

Spells Recorded In Spellbook
Level 1
[Charm]
[Analyze]
[Sprite Porter]
[Mana Bolt]
[Protection]
[Translate]
[Spell Copy]
[Sleep]
[Light]

Level 2
[Permanent Light]
[Detect Enemy]
[Detect Invisible]
[Telepathy]
[Invisibility]
[Find Object]
[Illusion]
[Spider Web]
[Mirage]
[Arcane Postcard]

Level 3

[Dispel Magic]
[Fireball]
[Fly]
[Hold]
[Infrared Vision]
[Lightning]
[Protection Circle]
[Protection from Missile]
[Water Breathing]
[Phantom Horse]
[Arcane Rope]

Level 4
[Greater Protection Circle]
[Control Monster]
[Confusion]
[Short Warp]
[Control Plants]
[Illusion Terrain]
[Ice Storm Wall]
[Concealment]
[Transform Other]
[Wall of Fire]
[Curse Break]
[Mana Sight]

Level 5
[Mana Strike]
[Control Undead]
[Evil Cloud]
[Elemental Control]
[Greater Hold]
[Mana Pot]
[Permeation]

[Telekinesis]
[Teleport]
[Wall of Stone]
[Physical Boost]
[Enchant]

Level 6
[Anti-Magic Barrier]
[Death Gaze]
[Destruction]
[Geass]
[Invisible Demon]
[Renovation]
[Project Illusion]
[Stoned]
[Wall of Iron]
[Weather Control]
[Forced March]

Level 7
[Create Ogre Platoon]
[Sense of Adept]
[Create Monster]
[Psycometry]
[Dimension Door]
[Greater Invisibility]
[Mind Crash]
[Control Gravity]
[Change Statue]
[Aport]
[Arcane Sword]
[Transport]

Level 8
[Giga Mana Strike]
[Perfect Resistance]
[Cloning]
[Blast Cloud]
[Wall of Force]
[Mind Control]
[Mind Wall]
[Infinity]
[Greater Polymorph Other]
[Six Rune]
[Create Special Monster]
[Word of Blind]

Level 9
[Move Outer Plane]
[Emergency]
[Create All Monster]
[Word of Death]
[Gate]
[Complete Recovery]
[Invincible]
[Chaotic Wall]
[Meteor]
[Shape Change]
[Time Stop]

Explanation About Spells
Spells recorded in the spellbook cannot be used without limit.
A total of 9 spells can be charged for each level, and activation uses up a charge.
As such, the maximum number of spells that Gio can use each day is 81 spells.
Of course, spells recorded in the spellbook that have not been charged cannot be used.
Incidentally, a level 1 wizard may only charge 1 level 1 spell each day.

Magic Items
Wizardry Staff
Robe +5
Protection Ring +5
Travelling Boots
Infinity Bag

Contents of Infinity Bag (sling bag)
Potion Server (Healing Potion x 8)
Quarterstaff +5 (Light)
Staff of Undead Control
Dagger +3 (Returning)
Whip +4
Cancel Rod
Medical Ring
Waterwalking Ring
Resist Fire Ring
Genie's Ring
Curse Command Ring
Telescope Lens
Protect Circle Shock
Pass Wall Globe (or Glove?)
Elven Mantle
Elven Boots
Enemy Find Wand
Dinner Cloth
ESP Medal
Anti-ESP Medal
Mapping Scroll
Alchemy Toolset
Arcanesmith Toolset
Arcane Quill
Soldiers of Bronze

Ultimate Coffin
Skull of Nameless God

- Skull of Nameless God (SOG) is an Artifact. Ultimate Coffin is an item for the sole purpose of holding SOG.

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The next day.

I am in the underground storeroom of Jiiteias Castle.

“[Wall of Iron]!”

As a result of my spell, a box taller than myself and made purely of iron appears.

I then transfer a portion of my treasures from the sling bag to this this perfect cube that does not even have joints, and as such is completely impossible to ‘open.’

“..... This, how do you take out its contents?”

“When needed, I can just use [Destruction] on the whole box.”

Claura shrugs her shoulders resignedly at my response. I doubt that resignation is due to my speech being too casual.

(T/N: Gio is now using casual speech.)

The change is not particularly due to any erotic developments that occurred last night. Rather, it is because the way I see her has merely changed along the lines of [stranger → colleague in the same team onground → nakama]. She does not seem to mind.

After lifting the castle with [Renovation] again just like last time, we set off for Lelis (in this state of affairs, even I did not want to stay one more night).

♥♦♣♠

The road that connects Shulendal in the far north with Lelis, reaching even Yuule, is apparently called the 'Royal Highway.'

(T/N: Anyone got a better suggestion for how to translate 法の街道? Legal Highway sounds really weird.)

According to what I've previously heard from Sedam, at the height of Shulendal's power 200~300 years ago, it used to control the entirety of this continent. However, the chaos from a large anki outbreak caused the country to decline, eventually leading to fragmentation, which is how this area came to be under the rule of the Liuus Union. When I heard the story, I thought "I see, the fantasy trope of an ancient super civilization," but this is all actually within the realm of common sense.

However, despite losing the actual ruling authority, being the oldest civilized country means it still possesses enormous influence. As examples, the Carbanera Knight Order still swears allegiance to the Shulendal royal family up to today (although they don't have to pay tax), and Claura also proudly told me that "the Andel family's lineage traces back to Shulendal!" I think it is like how the Muromachi shogunate was like for the people living in the Sengoku era.

♥♦♣♠

Claura didn’t want to ride the phantom horse together down the Royal Highway, so we are leisurely making progress on foot.

Though there are gentle ups and downs, the highway is generally flat, making the going both easy and peaceful. At times, we pass by shepherds chasing herds of livestock, caravans, and other travellers. Everyone has relaxed expressions on their faces. Wasn’t this part of the road prone to bandit attacks only up till recently? When I posed the question to a merchant who we happened to camp out with, he kindly explained to me that “a Great Wizard-sama has taken up residence around these parts, so all the evildoers have long fled the area.”

Isn’t the spread of information way too fast?! is what I thought, but there’s no use crying over spilled milk. Don’t tell me, the Grand Cross has been purposely spreading it as a rumor?

Fortunately, it seems that the rumor going around does not go so far as to include a precise description of said ‘Great Wizard.’

What with this and that, I wonder how many decades it has been since I last took such a laidback walk free of all distractions. Watching the scenery evocative of pastoral songs from Central Europe inch by while travelling in the company of a lady who, though noisy, is a stunning beauty. I somehow find myself deeply feeling that it was a good thing that I was transferred over. Sorry, my colleagues and friends at my workplace.

♥♦♣♠

Three days after setting off from Jiiteias Castle.

No matter how peaceful and enjoyable the journey, the monotonous scenery stretching far as the eye can see does get boring. Seriously, this is why us modern people are no good.

Abruptly.

“Once we clear that hill, Liuus Lake and Lelis should come into view.”

“Ohhhh!”

At Claura’s words, I break into a mad dash, taking giant leaps up the slope. I do indeed feel the wind carrying traces of humidity. When I reach the top, my line of sight widens up all at once.

“Wooowww……”

It’s the sea! is literally the first thought that jumped into my mind.

The blueness of the almost frightening amount of water fills my vision. So this is Liuus Lake. The opposite shore is not visible due to the fog. I’ve previously seen Lake Biwa from a viewing platform, but I can say for sure that this definitely beats it.

“Awesome! A fortress city!”

At the end of the highway is the city of Lelis, spread out as if it is trying to embrace the lake. The entire place is encircled by two layers of solid stone walls. The part where the city touches the lake is clearly a port, with large ship-like silhouettes visible even from here. The city’s buildings are all made of stone, and

the rooftops are colorful and a delight for the eyes.

It is a true fortress city. I was excited when I first laid eyes on White Sword Castle, but this…… This is on a whole different level altogether.

“..... Wait a-, you’re too fast!”

I hear a sweat-drenched Claura having a bit of trouble behind me, but I pay her no mind. I would pay her no mind, but well, yea it was my bad.

“Sorry, I wanted to see Lelis as soon as I can.”

“That’s fine and all, but…… You sure are a good walker for your age, aren’t you?”

“‘For your age’ was unnecessary.”

I didn’t tell her, but my boots are a pair of magic items called Travelling Boots. If I felt like it, I could keep pace with a racehorse without feeling any fatigue. They are the reason why a journey on foot isn’t painful for me, considering my age. Hmm, could it be that these boots are actually bad for my health?

♥♦♣♠

Taking full advantage of the abundant amount of water nearby, Lelis is surrounded by a great moat.

There is a large drawbridge about two traffic lanes wide over which caravans, peddlers, and farmers pulling carts are going back and forth in huge crowds.

The Royal Road does not only reach Yuule in the east, but also stretches north and south, so the number of people here are on a whole different level.

The great castle gates at the other end of the drawbridge is currently wide open, but of course, there are guards serving as security and city entrance inspectors. The guards are wearing the cliched matching chain mail, helmets, short swords, and spears, but their movements are brisk and lively, so morale must be high.

After lining up for about 20 minutes, Claura and I finally reach the front of the line. On the other side of the large doors, I see a beautiful stone-paved square with a fountain and men and women who appear to be minstrels playing tunes on their instruments.

"..... Come on, write down your name and identity and place of stay."

Seeing my attention drawn towards the other side of the great doors, Claura jabs me with her elbow. The city guard smiles wryly while offering me the ledger for travellers (it's just a wooden board though).

Incidentally, Claura presented something like a pass.

"Ahh, apologies. Name…… Gio Margils. Identity? Commoner, I guess. Place of stay……"

"Ma. Gi. Cian. Guild. is fine with you, yes?"

"Oh, alright, I guess. Next is……"

"Wait a-!?"

The city guard who offered the ledger raises his voice hysterically.

“Gio Margils?! Are you sure about that?!”

“..... Yeeeess, why?”

Un, speaking of which, the rumor about me has spread pretty far, hasn’t it. For some reason, I’m getting a sense of foreboding about this.

“In other words, you are the Great Wizard-sama, are you not?! The one who aided the Carbanera Knight Order and destroyed the anki nest?!”

“What did you say?!”

“Great Wizard-sama?!”

“It’s Gio Margils-sama! Our hero!”

“Great Wizard-sama who defeated the anki!”

Not only the city guards, the people in line behind us and the people on the other side of the door also begin raising a clamor. Ugu. I feel my face growing red from the embarrassment.

…… In a second, I prepared myself to be crushed by the crowd, but the people respond unexpectedly.

With myself and Claura (and the poor city guard) in the center, the passerbys form a ring, directing heated glances our way.

“..... His appearance looks pretty normal though……”

“But black hair is rare……”

“I did hear that he came from a country across the sea……”

“Is that the staff that can shoot out a meteor?”

While I can hear the commotion, not a single person moves from their place.

“..... I think these people will not move until they hear at least a word from you.”

Though sighing, Claura is unexpectedly calm about this. How much will my words be exaggerated…… But well, there’s no helping it. I suppose I am going to have to give up aiming to live peacefully as an ordinary person in this world for the next little while.

“..... Apologies for the commotion, citizens of Lelis.”

I prop up my Wizardry Staff and slowly look around me. They might not hear me if I speak too softly, so I clench my gut and……

“It is an honor to visit the beautiful city of Lelis. Speaking of which, may we pass through?”

“Ah! Ex-, excuse me! Please, by all means! Um, welcome to Lelis!”

My delivery aside, words that lift up the other side coming so naturally to me means that I really am still a Japanese middle-aged salaryman on the inside. The second half of what I said was directed to the nearby city guard, at which all of the city guards, in unison, strike the ground with the butt of their spears and

bow respectfully. So cool.

“Well then, good citizens, please excuse us.”

After I acknowledged my identity and gave them a word, I see the people visibly relieved. People begin offering me words of welcome and bowing to me while opening up the way towards the great doors.

“Come on, let’s get going.”

Claura immediately starts walking. Which reminds me, she’s accompanied me this whole while for the sole purpose of bringing me to the Magician Guild. I suppose I should also hurry a bit.

However.

“AAAAAH! GIO-SAN! GIO-SAN!!”

“Gufu.”

A small-bodied person weaves through the crowd and stops me from walking. To be more specific, it was done through a hug with enough force to almost qualify as a tackle.

“Gio-saaaan!”

With both arms locked around my torso, a brown-haired girl is looking up at me with teary eyes. Oh hey, it’s Mora.

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Chapter 28: Mora & Claura

“Gio-saaaan!”

The young, suntanned girl glues herself to me. If this happened 20 years ago, or actually even 15 years ago, I would have been very happy indeed.

“Hi there…… Mora. It’s been a while. I didn't imagine I’d get to see you again so soon.”

With my appearance being in the forties, and my real self also being in the forties, this is just a kid getting attached to an adult. The reason why there was that short pause is because I remembered addressing her with the -san suffix. Fortunately, she does not seem particularly displeased with the change. Feeling relieved, I rub her brown head round and round while gentlemanly extricating myself.

“Cus! Gio-san, even after destroying the anki nest, you never came back! And you also had the knights deliver our stolen cargo…… Could it be that you don’t want to see me anymore, is what I thought……”

“There’s no way that’s true. I’m indebted to you, plus I also have business with Irudo-shi.”

“Oh please don’t say that, I’m the one who is indebted to you…... “

That may be true from an objective point of view, but the way I see it, she is the first person that I’ve gotten to know in this world (I believe I am justified in not counting Jyagul and his cronies), and I have not forgotten the joy I felt when I finally got her to trust me.

“Great Wizard-sama…… How can we ever repay you……”

“Ojou-sama expected you to arrive any day, so she always made a detour here whenever she went out.”

The two gentle-looking man and woman holding themselves behind Mora deeply lower their heads to me. From their demeanor, they must be servants currently accompanying Mora.

“It was no trouble at all. Mind it not.”

“Our house is in the direction of Commerce Avenue! Father is also waiting to see you! Let’s go!”

Mora starts pulling my arm like it’s the most natural thing to do, but a figure moves to stand in front of us.

“..... Mora? I’m sorry, but we have business to take care of. Right now.”

“Oh, is that so? I hope it goes well. In the meantime, Gio-san has to come this way.”

“I said ‘we,’ did I not?!”

Claura grabs my other arm and also starts pulling.

What is this.

Is a beautiful girl and a beautiful young girl currently fighting over me?

Mora’s goodwill towards me is, at best, that of a teenager towards a reliable adult, such as an uncle or teacher. As for Claura, she is merely acting on her sense of duty as a member of the Magician Guild. Well, if I am to be really generous with myself, maybe I can bring myself to hope that she also thinks of me as a friend at least a little bit.

I know of several pathetic creatures (middle-aged men) who misunderstood this kind of situation as being popular with the ladies and stepped onto the wrong path in life.

“Ahh, Mora. I’m sorry, but I have kept the Magician Guild waiting for quite a while already. I will first take care of the troublesome things, then I’ll stop by your house. How does that sound?”

Even I am not so indecisive as to mistake the order of priority here.

“Ah…… S-, sorry. It must be something really difficult to do, right?”

“Well, something like that. I will definitely come by after I’m done, so please also give Irudo-shi my regards.”

“Hai, understood! Our place is the biggest store on Commerce Avenue, so you

will be able to tell at a glance! We'll be waiting!"

Mora gives me one last bow before leaving with a smile on her face. Her happy-looking servants also lower their heads several times before following her.

The crowd that surrounded us has already thinned out quite considerably, and in the end was dispersed altogether by the considerate city guard.

He too left to go back to his own post, but not before telling me "the feats of Great Wizard-sama are already being sung of in heroic poems composed by the minstrels!" That is a piece of trivia that I did not need to know……

♥♦♣♠

"I really do not want to stand out any more than this…… But to think that we would bump into Mora again so soon. What were the chances, right?"

"Yes, wasn't it just great?"

"L-, Let's go! Onward to Magician Guild!"

Noticing the pulsing of the vein on Claura's forehead reach dangerous levels, I immediately start walking forward at a brisk pace.

♥♦♣♠

Lelis's avenues, at least, are clean and agreeable.

The stone paving is even decorated with mosaic designs here and there. The people going back and forth are all wearing colorfully dyed clothes, and there is almost nobody going about barefooted. Although fashion looks quite simple in general, the richer people also sport hats, shawls, mantles, or even girdles.

The people in the avenue do not notice me, but there are quite a few who wave at Claura or bow to her, so she must be relatively well-known.

A lot of the buildings are constructed out of wood and stone, and almost all of them are at least 3 stories high. As the whole city is encircled by walls, the densely packed buildings have no room to grow but up. This part is exactly like how it's told in fantasy TRPGs.

"..... Mu."

After walking behind Claura for a while, a sudden thought causes me to look upwards.

"....."

"What are you getting all restless about?"

Noticing me walking while looking at the windows of the tall buildings, Claura questions me.

"Nah, it's just…… Before, I heard that in large cities, people throw garbage out of the window……"

"..... Hah?"

Turns out, Lelis and all cities above a certain size are all serviced by a sewer system. This is especially true for Lelis which, blessed with the water source that is Liuus Lake, even has waterworks in a portion of the city.

"What kind of Roman empire is this supposed to be……"

Well anyways, it was a mistake expecting things in the reality I know…… no, things in the medieval era of my previous world to be the same as in Sedia. [He] did say that this is a light novel style other world, after all……

“Speaking of which, what is the estimated population of this city?”

“If I remember correctly, they checked the register a few years back and counted about 25,000 people. If we include those without citizenship, there might be thirty to forty thousand in total.”

Forty thousand! If I remember correctly, Paris was the biggest city in all Europe during the Middle Ages, boasting of at least 200,000 in population, which makes this almost a metropolis. If there are metropoles of this size every here and there, then this world’s cultural development is much farther ahead than medieval Europe.

(T/N: Yes, the statistic on Paris is correct. So even I don’t understand the logic behind this comparison.)

…… Then does this mean that there was an anki nest only a few days’ march from such a metropolis? That was a close one.

♥♦♣♠

And so goes our conversation, until we find ourselves in front of a huge building slightly behind the central plaza. Clearly paying zero heed to its surroundings, it is a black mansion surrounded by walls of its own. It looks so imposing that it can almost be called a fort in its own right.

Above its main entrance is a crest composed of 4 staves arranged in a geometric design.

This is the Magician Guild, Lelis branch.

“I am the 5th Seat, Claura Andel.”

“Yes, ma’am! We have awaited your return!”

Upon hearing Claura’s name, these door guards that are wearing different armor than those at the city gates immediately open the doors for us and accompany us, with utmost deference, into the building and to a guest room. Judging from the attitude of the guards, as well as the servants tasked with showing us the way, it appears that they already know about me.

Claura leaves first to report about me to the brass of the Guild, but I did not wait long in the guest room before she came back.

“Are you listening, Margils…… Gio?”

“What?”

“From now on, I will bring you before this branch’s Branch Leader and top echelons. I have already told them about you, both just now and in a letter that I sent before us, but all of that was merely what I have seen with my own eyes.”

Nn? Does that mean that she did not tell her superiors about the workings of wizardry that I had explained to her? Isn’t it bad if she doesn’t complete the hou-ren-sou cycle?

(T/N: Hou-ren-sou: A Japanese business mnemonic of hougoku (to report), renraku (to inform), and soudan (to consult). It is used as a basic tool in businesses to facilitate smooth business communication.)

“Personally speaking, I am praying that you and the Magician Guild will build a positive relationship. However…… I do not know how they will treat you. I believe they are not ones who will make fun of you, but……”

While opening the door of the guest room, she turns around and looks at me.

“I shall stand outside and wait for the length of time it would take to count to thirty. After I step out, I will no longer be an adventurer nor a noble…… and not even a friend. It would serve you well to think of me as a single magician belonging to the Magician Guild.”

The door closes behind her.

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Chapter 29: At the Magician Guild

Let’s think about what Claura just said.

No matter how I mull over it, the only interpretation that I can come up with is that she’ll wait for me to chant three spells.

It’s almost as if I am going to march into an enemy camp…… Does Claura perhaps expect the Magician Guild to be hostile towards me?

I mean, all I want is to establish a cooperative relationship to oppose anki. And well, to ask if they know anything about The Guardian.

“..... Well, there’s never any harm in being extra careful……”

My perspective is clearly still based on the values of modern Japan. This time, let’s just obediently accept her advice.

First off, [Detect Enemy]. Anyone who possesses hostility towards me will be glowing in my eyes, that’s the kind of spell it is. To be honest, I feel a certain

amount of resistance against using this. Though it is detecting hostility, anything that peeks into or manipulates someone else's mind seems, for the upright member of society that I am, like a form of cheating.

Furthermore, in normal TRPGs, the player side spamming this spell causes the mastermind to be easily revealed and thus wrecks the scenario, so GMs greatly frown upon this spell. Well, that's not relevant here though.

After also casting [Invisible Demon] and [Emergency], all my preparations are complete.

Uh-oh, that was longer than 30 seconds.

♥♦♣♠

"Well then, let us go."

Standing outside is a cool Claura who is looking like nothing had happened. Seeing me emerge, she starts off towards the hall on the top floor.

The hall is circular and about the size of a gymnasium. The color scheme is based on black, just like the exterior of the building, so there is a definite sense of pressure. The domed ceiling is inlaid with stained glass, and the walls are decorated with woven works depicting what appears to be magical characters.

There are already three magicians seated at the table.

The one in the middle stands up.

"Welcome to the Magician Guild. I am the Lelis Branch Leader, 1st Seat Heldol Sairam." (Heldol)

He is a man with a lot of ornamentation on his robe. Mid-thirties, I'd guess? With his blond hair all swept back, he cuts a rather fine figure. In one of his hands is a staff engraved with the sigil of the Magician Guild. Full of self-confidence, sociable expression, open attitude. He is giving off the exact same vibe as those young CEOs looking to sell off their start-up companies.

"Wizard of Jiiteias Castle, Gio Margils. I am deeply honored by this invitation." (Gio)

While offering the statement that I am beginning to get used to, I bow once. Being able to attach "of Jiiteias Castle" makes things so much easier. It's wonderful that I'm no longer without a fixed residence.

"Please, the honor is all ours." Heldol

"Yoroshiku onegaiitashimasu." (Gio)

(T/N: The most formal way to say yoroshiku there is.)

The people beside Heldol also offer their greetings in turn. The 2nd Seat, which means the Vice-Leader, is called Yahman, and the 3rd Seat names herself as Nasaria.

Behind Branch Leader Heldol is a male and female wearing black uniforms and holding spears. I am given no explanation about them, so they're probably guards.

"Come, no need to be reserved. Please take a seat." (Heldol)

Thankfully, no one has lit up due to [Detect Enemy]. Yet.

♥♦♣♠

I take a seat at the round table, facing the magicians. Claura wordlessly sits next to the 3rd Seat lady.

While (pretending to) calmly leaning back into my beautifully etched wooden chair, I survey them.

The only one with a relaxed expression is the Branch Leader. Everyone else looks stiff with tension. Claura is expressionless.

“I’ve heard that you hail from a faraway place. What do you think of Lelis?” (Heldol)

“The townscape is beautiful, and the people are full of liveliness. I think it a wonderful city.” (Gio)

His starting move is small talk, huh. He is clearly not the type who is only good at research.

“Lelis is famous for its waterways, Great Water Gate, and Senjoumai (Boat-Top Dancing). Please take the time to enjoy them all.” (Heldol)

Senjoumai (Boat-Top Dancing)? Sounds interesting.

“Branch Leader, maybe it’s about time……” (!)

“Fumu, you’re right.” (Heldol)

As the trifling conversation goes on, the Vice-Leader whispers to Heldol. The number 2 who pours water on the exchange with the very important (or should be) guest, huh. This was most likely staged. If it wasn’t staged, that would mean there isn’t much to expect of the Magician Guild as an organization.

“I’m sorry, but we should go to the main topic at hand. To jump directly to the point, what is [wizardry]?” (Heldol)

A question that I’d expected. It is time to put to use the line that I had puzzled over on my way to Lelis.

“I shall grant you an answer. Wizardry is the technique to, using one’s own heart as the channel, call forth the energy of chaos from beyond the world and utilize it to reform the very laws of reality.” (Gio)

“ “ “.....” ” ”

The three magicians have all fallen silent. Is it as I’d feared, that anything beyond their common sense could only be received with suspicion?

But before long, Heldol opens his mouth with an honest expression on his face.

“Magic is the technique to manipulate the power hidden within the natural. In other words, it only functions within the laws of reality.” (Heldol)

The reason why arrows of ice and walls of wind are possible is because such things already exist, huh. As I’d surmised, it is indeed the absolute opposite of wizardry.

“Margils-dono. We beg your patience, as the only thing that we are sure of, as of now, is that you have no magical power. However, according to Claura’s report, as well as information from the Carbanera Knight Order and the Adventurer Guild, there is no doubt that you have used magic powerful enough to defeat an entire army of anki……” (Heldol)

Which reminds me, I was told that Arnogia and Sedam also came to Lelis to report, Arnogia to the city's Council and Sedam to the Adventurer Guild. Seems like the organizations are all sharing information properly. On this issue, at least.

"We are unable to react with anything but surprise. At the fact that there is another useable system of magic completely different from anything thus far, that is." (Heldol)

"I find myself in the same state. For me, it is wizardry that is the norm, and magic the astounding new system." (Gio)

"Is it so for you as well?" (Heldol)

"Indeed. There is much that I wish to know about magic. If your interest in wizardry is the same, then I shall endeavour to answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability." (Gio)

When the other side is wary of you, it is a good idea to be the first to express willingness towards cooperation. I offered my words while praying that I'm emanating a "I wanna be on good terms with you~" aura.

To my relief, all of the magicians, beginning with Heldol, nod deeply in response.

"We are delighted to hear this. In which case, may we immediately take you up on your offer……" (Heldol)

"You wish to first see a demonstration of [wizardry], yes?" (Gio)

Presenting myself too humbly would only encourage them to take advantage of me in the future. For what it's worth, I also nod self-importantly.

“Turning people into stone and calling down meteors, was it? …… Is it really true?” (Nasaria)

The 3rd Seat, Nasaria’s question was posed shyly.

“We beg your pardon. It is not that we doubt you…… It's just that we really wish to be able to confirm with our own eyes……” (Yahman)

The Vice-Leader, who looks to be the oldest among them, hurriedly adds to what Nasaria said.

Well, it’s not like I don’t understand him.

Not many people would intentionally antagonize someone who they think can drop a meteor anytime, after all.

“As per your wishes, I can demonstrate, but I think a more appropriate spell would be good.” (Gio)

I nod in what I think is my friendly smile.

“Ahhh, apologies. We heard from Claura that you also can create dragons and anki. May we see that then?” (Heldol)

“Fumu…… very well.” (Gio)

“Furthermore, may we do some observation as it happens?” (Heldol)

“Naturally. I do not mind.” (Gio)

“Thank you for your cooperation. We shall start then……” (Heldol)

The Branch Leader jerks his chin at the male and female behind him, who I now notice with a second look are no more than teenagers. They wordlessly approach me and each take out a crystalline medal from their breast pocket. The Vice-Leader offers me an explanation while wiping off the sweat on his forehead.

“Th-, those are tools that can detect even the most miniscule of magical power. They are incapable of causing any harm whatsoever.” (Yahman)

Guess they still have some doubts.

There is no reaction from [Detect Enemy], and the spells I’d cast as precaution should be able to get me out even if this is a trap.

♥♦♣♠

“Without further ado.” (Gio)

I intentionally leave my Wizardry Staff leaning against the table as I stand up.

Imaging myself in the Inner World, I make my way through the Door of Wizardry. In front of my eyes in the real world, there is no change in the medals held out by the boy and girl. I can tell that aside from Claura, all of the magicians are holding their breaths.

My Inner World self heads towards the chaos down the spiral staircase, stopping at the 9th floor Spell Archive. I lay my hands on the book I’m looking for and release the power of chaos stored inside.

“By means of this spell, may a single Baby Red Dragon be created and be under my control for 30 minutes. [Create All Monster].” (Gio)

“Ohhh!?”

“Hiii!?”

Right after the chant, chaotic energy materializes as a torrent of crimson that converges in the center of the hall and turns into a red dragon.

Though this Baby one is smaller than the Small one that I had made before, it is still the size of a bull, which makes it more than enough as a performance.

“Gyuuooohhh!”

It roars once, then prostrates itself as if it is trying to convey the fact that it is under my control.

“..... O-, oi. Any reaction from the detectors?” (Yahman)

“There is no reaction.” (Girl Guard)

The voice of the young girl who answered the Vice-Leader was also shaking.

“Truly marvelous! So it really is possible to do this without the usage of magical power! If we can explain this mystery, the history of magic development will jump forward a thousand years in one leap!” (Heldol)

So said Branch Leader Heldol while exaggeratedly clapping his hands.

“That sounds delightful indeed.” (Gio)

In contrast, my own mood is, contrary to my words, quite gloomy.

The reason is because the figure of Heldol, through my currently [Detect Enemy]-enhanced eyes, is now glowing ominously.

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Chapter 30: Experiment

"[Detect Enemy]~. Alright come on, is that noble actually on my side?"

"Tsk. Why do you doubt people so quickly? As fellow humans, why do you not try the thing called 'trusting each other'?"

"Stop stalling and just tell me the results of the spell already, GM~"

"Fine, fine. 'In Gio's eyes, the figure of the noble is glowing.' You satisfied now?"

"I knew it! Now I know he possesses hostility against me, but the question is how much? Is he just miffed? Or does he really want to kill me?"

"Hah! Who knows~~"

♥♦♣♠

Damn, a conversation with my GM from long ago just replayed inside my head.

[Detect Enemy] does indeed detect hostility, but it does not indicate the degree. It means that worse case scenario, Heldol could just lose it and come lunging at me right here and now.

In the midst of such thoughts.

I hear a hard-sounding noise like kata kata close by. It is the sound of the clattering teeth of the boy and girl who had been holding those magical power detectors. Their faces are also pale.

They are most likely frightened by the Baby Red Dragon sprawled next to me. Although it is just a Baby, its mouth is still big enough to tear off a human's head with a single chomp, so being afraid of it is only natural. When I look towards the magicians, I notice that both Yahman and Nasaria also look very worried about being attacked.

“Apologies about having caused a fright.”

While trying my best to sound calming, I use [Magic Dispel] on the Baby Red Dragon. The large red figure fades and blurs to nothing, causing the two to breathe out loudly in relief.

“So you can both summon and dismiss it at will. Truly impressive. Even if it was an illusion, it would still be worthy of commendation.”

So says Heldol after gesturing with one hand for the boy and girl to return. He is smiling, but there’s no fooling my spell’s effects.

“I can bring it out again, if so needed. But with this, I hope that there is no more doubt as to whether [wizardry] exists or not, yes?”

“Aah, indeed. With that clarified, however, I now have another question of extreme weight.”

It’s that one that Claura asked me before, right? Whether wizardry is a personal ability that only I possess, or whether it is a set of techniques that other people can also learn and master.

…… How am I supposed to answer a question that even I don’t know the answer to?

Going by appearances, it seems that Heldol is hoping for the latter. But for now, let’s try having this conversation.

“Is it whether my wizardry can be relayed as a set of techniques?”

“That is exactly it! We of the [Subjugation Faction] hold magic as a tool granted us by the Creator for the purpose of fighting against anki. When there is an opportunity to strengthen that magic, it is the duty of all magicians to spare no effort in embracing that change.”

Nn? ‘Subjugation Faction,’ and ‘Creator’? Not good, more words that I don’t know. Let's remember to ask Claura later. But well, magic being for the purpose of fighting anki goes right along with my goals.

“As for the answer to that question, even I know not. However, what I amable to do is explain how I became able to use wizardry.”

“Ohhh~”

Delight comes over the face of Heldol and the other two top seats.

But unfortunately, his hostility still remains.

♥♦♣♠

Several tens of minutes later.

“I see. What an astounding mystery it is.”

“Unlike the magic board and magic characters, which naturally show up in our vision, you have to actively dive into your heart, is it?”

I have just finished giving the magicians a complete explanation of ‘the settings behind wizardry.’ To think that it was worked out to such a level of detail—even I am amazed. Of course, I did not tell them the important parts, such as how to train to see the Inner World, about the Door of Wizardry, and about ‘charging.’

Despite that, it seems the magicians are still suffering from quite a bit of culture shock. To be honest, when I think of how they’ve spent years polishing real techniques, and how all I have to offer are the details of a game, I feel slightly unpleasant.

“If what Margils-dono is saying is true, then does it mean that just like magic, learning wizardry would be difficult if training does not begin at a young age?”

“I suppose……”

The Vice-Leader and Branch Leader begin furiously whispering to each other.

It’s not like I can’t enhance my hearing to listen in or just outright read their minds, but…… the sense of virtues of a modern Japanese person that I still can’t seem to abandon, as well as the guilt I feel in regards to these magicians’ efforts,

both stop me from doing so.

“What do you think, Margils-dono?”

In the midst of my inner struggle, Heldol cheerfully raises a suggestion.

“As a start, what do you think of an experiment or two?”

“Experiment, you say?”

“Indeed. How about an attempt at teaching us the very basics of the basics of wizardry? I believe this method would be the fastest way to find out.”

“Well…… you have a point. But it will take time, you understand.”

If, after several years of training, the conclusion at the end is that Sedia people cannot use wizardry at all, I wouldn’t even know where to start apologizing. But before even that, I’m still not sure whether I should teach them how to use wizardry. At the moment, I am leaning heavily towards “that is a very bad idea.”

“Actually, this branch is managing a magic school. That place currently applies a new method of teaching magic that I devised myself. For that purpose, I have gathered a lot of talented individuals. I wish for you to try teaching them wizardry.”

“Heldol! I mean, Branch Leader! Surely you are not……!”

For the first time since this meeting started, Claura butts in. Apparently unaffected by her sharp voice, Heldol displays a cool face.

“If it is on those ‘magic soldiers,’ feel free to do as many experiments as you like.”

So saying, Heldol gestures towards young boy and girl in black uniform.

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According to Magician Guild Branch Leader Heldol's very proudly delivered explanation, details regarding the existences that he refers to as 'magic soldiers' are as follows.

Normally, there are four stages to the training and maturation of a magician. The first is to sense and control one's own magical power. The second is to become able to see the phenomenon called the 'magic board.' The third is to understand the meaning of the magic characters that show up on the board and to utilize them. The last is to know how to group the characters and release magic power according to one's image.

Those who clear Stage 1 are apprentices. Stage 2, novices. Stage 3, trainees. It is only after attaining Stage 4 that the practitioner can be called a real magician.

As can be guessed from the naming, Stage 2 is the minimum requirement for entrance into the Magician Guild. It takes most people 2 to 5 years to progress through one stage, so the shortest predictable time for an absolute beginner to become a magician is still 8 years. Furthermore, only 1 out of 10 people who reach Stage 1 has the necessary qualities to achieve Stage 2.

"Due to this, I decided to completely change my way of thinking—if all we want

is just battle potential against anki, then we don't actually need full-fledged magicians. Even if someone can't see the magic board, as long as they can use one or two simple spells, that would do the job."

The magic board that appears in magicians' eyes are crucial to their practice, so he must have thought really hard to come up with a way to circumvent it. As a result,

"It turns out that as long as someone has magic power, this idea can be realized by forcibly planting the needed magic characters and imagery into the person! Re-grouping characters and learning new spells would both be impossible, but as a [soldier], this is more than enough! Above anything else, the short training time means we can mass produce them! Magic soldiers are the greatest weapon against anki!"

In game terms, he is talking about foregoing a crucial step like [magic control] and forcibly mastering only a single spell, like «Ice Arrow». In theory, it sounds like an idea that might have merit, but seeing Claura and the 3rd Seat's shameful faces, I surmise that there is much more to this story.

"During the anki outbreak 10 years ago, the city of Lelis suffered enormous damage. The Carbanera Knight Order that we'd been relying on turned out to be useless…… Thus it dawned on me that Lelis needs to have a fighting force of its own, one that would be effective against anki." (Heldol)

"The magic soldiers begin training at 8 years old at the earliest, so they should also be receptive of your wizardry training. All credit for this wonderful idea belongs to the Branch Leader." (Yahman)

So says 2nd Seat Yahman with an ingratiating smile.

From 8 years old?! Training 8-year-olds into soldiers is just mad. But…… what if

this is considered normal in Sedia?

“They start at such a young age? How do you gather them?”

“Naturally, by accepting applicants. The children of nobles and wealthy citizens similarly grieved by the defenseless state of Lelis who wish to protect this city with their own hands come to us of their own accord.”

“..... Though it seems that of late, the ticket window has widened quite considerably.” (Claura)

“That’s, well…… the numbers are important, after all.” (Yahman)

Yahman wipes his sweat while nervously answering Claura’s barbed question. The whole thing is sounding more and more suspicious by the minute.

But wait, in the first place……

“If it’s the anki nest, I already destroyed it a few days ago. The situation is no longer one where you have to go to such lengths to acquire fighting potential, is it?”

“..... Dear oh dear.”

“Nests have appeared numerous times already. The past ten years were just exceptionally peaceful—a new one can pop up tomorrow and it wouldn’t be strange.”

Now not only Heldol, but the other three magicians also look exasperated. I guess at least this is common sense here.

If something like that can appear anytime, then even I can understand why they want to amass fighting potential……

“..... So those two are magic soldiers? May I ask them something?”

“Of course, of course. You two, answer whatever Margils-dono asks you.” (Heldol)

“ “Yes, sir!” ”

The young boy and girl respond with a clack of their heels.

“Fumu…… Why did the two of you want to be magic soldiers? Wasn’t the training hard?”

The boy opens his mouth to answer me first. He has a well-featured face and looks like an intelligent kid.

“Sir. As a Lelis noble, it is my duty to be of use in the protection of the city. The training was very strict, but under the guidance of my instructors, I was able to learn everything I need to be a magic soldier.”

“I also applied because I want to protect my family and the people of this city…… Also, as a magic soldier, I earn a salary.”

The young girl, who answered after the boy, has earnest and pure eyes. Naturally, neither of them are being lit up by [Detect Enemy].

“Aahh, these two are from the 1st Generation, and are fully completed magic soldiers. The ones that we want you to teach are from the 3rd Gen, who are still

undergoing training at the magic school.”

“Uumu……”

I cross my arms and hmm.

Somehow, the conversation has become completely different from what I’d expected. As before, the light of hostility is still shining from Heldol, but it appears that his hostility is not the kind where he wants to kill me on the spot. However, as [Detect Enemy] is reacting to him, I don’t think it’s something on the level of him being vaguely annoyed.

In other words…… it is likely the kind of hostility where he wants me to teach the magic soldier trainees, and then steal the curriculum and know-how and dispose of me.

It is a simple thing to just reject his proposal. Right now, even if the magicians and magic soldiers attacked me together, I’ve made preparations that enable me to get away.

With all this in mind.

Should I really decline?

In moments like these, adults calm down and carefully weigh the merits and demerits.

Firstly, the merit of accepting are two-fold: earning a favor with the Magician Guild, and the possibility of increasing my fighting forces if the experiments go well. Demerits are also two-fold: the possibility of being bound for an extended period of time by the experiments, and a high possibility of the Magician Guild

turning on me even if the experiments succeed. Well, there is also the possibility of the experiments failing, so that is a demerit too.

On the flip side, the merit of declining are…… not having to shoulder any unnecessary problems. That's about it, I think. As for demerits, there would be a high possibility of the Magician Guild turning hostile against me, and the lost opportunity for Lelis to increase its fighting strength. Well…… it might also sever the relationship that I have with Claura, which I suppose I should also count as a demerit.

Furthermore…… it would also mean turning a blind eye to those kids being recruited to fight against anki. By my own set of common sense, this is a huge demerit.

"..... Have you reached a decision yet?"

As my silence stretches on, Claura prompts me again impatiently. She seems to be in a bad mood, but I don't understand why. I wonder which answer she is hoping from me.

No helping it. Let's handle this the adult way, then.

"This is for the sake of defeating anki. We wish for you to accept." (Heldol)

"How is it, Margils-dono?" (Yahman)

When I raise my face, both Heldol and Yahman lean forward.

"I wish to favorably consider it, but given the complexity of the proposal, I need several days to think about it."

♥♦♣♠

As I was about to leave, Heldol suggested that I see the magic soldiers' strength for myself. He said that the purpose is to help me decide by giving me a reference, but all I could see was him wanting to show them off.

Consequently, the boy and girl are currently facing humanoid-shaped targets lined up in the Magician Guild's courtyard, standing with their spears at the ready.

"Commence attack!"

" "Yes, sir!" "

At Heldol's signal, the two hold their spears vertically. With a second look, I notice that a part of their spears have complicated designs that look like words (those are probably the magic characters) etched in.

"Fire Lance!"

"Wind Lance!"

A lance of fire and wind emerges from his and her spear, respectively, and cleanly pierces through a target each. His target goes up in flames, while hers is sliced to bits.

"Hou……"

I haven't had much opportunity to see magic, but I'm at least sure that their attacks were more powerful than Jyagul's.

However.

“Haa, haaah……”

“Uguh.”

The two magic soldiers are completely out of breath, desperately clinging to their spears to remain standing. It is as if they’ve just dashed several laps at full speed.

“It is because they’re using magic without the magic board. The consumption of a certain amount of physical and mental strength is unavoidable. With the 3rd Gen, we have implemented various changes to the training curriculum to improve on this.”

Even while seeing the state of the two, Heldol remains unfazed.

“The consumption looks quite severe…… Are you two alright?”

“W-, we’re fine.”

The boy painfully straightens his back, and the girl forcibly rouses herself.

“Are you sure? You’re not just forcing yourself?”

I grab the boy’s shoulders and peer into his eyes.

“!? I-, I’m fine!”

Surprised, the boy shakes off my hands, but for the split second I saw his eyes, I noticed that they were definitely red.

“Unfortunately, those who make it to this level are extremely few in number. But with your help, we can produce these magic soldiers at even lower costs and in higher numbers…… no, I believe that we can produce ones of even higher quality. We await a favorable response from you.”

So says Heldol with that sociable smile he had on at the very start. Every single one of his words bother me somehow, and he’s still glowing with the light of [Detect Enemy]. Being able to hide his real thoughts so well actually impresses me a little.

Heldol, the 2nd and 3rd Seats, and the magic soldiers all head back into the guild building, leaving me alone with Claura.

“Turns out I can’t stay at the Magician Guild after all.”

“Because you declined……”

“Claura, may I ask for your advice again? What do you think I should do?”

“My wish is aligned with that of the Guild’s.”

“With that Branch Leader’s?”

“I, too, lost several family members in the fight against the anki ten years ago. The reason I became a magician is to gain the power to protect what is important to me from the anki. On that, at least, my thinking is the same as his.”

“But, to turn children so young into soldiers……”

“If there was another option, I would have chosen it already.”

Claura’s words sounded obstinate. I guess this is territory that I, someone who’s come to this world only less than a month ago, cannot yet step into.

“Well, give it some serious thought. However…… just do not ever forget the first warning that I gave you.”

If the Branch Leader gets serious about disposing of me, would she also turn into my enemy?

The way I am right now, even if I would gladly use [Telepathy] on the Branch Leader, I simply cannot bring myself to use it on her.

“Mora must be so bored with waiting around now, yes? Hurry up and go to her already.”

“Umu. Indeed, such is my intention. It’s just…… I don’t know the way.”

“HAH?!”

Mora said her house is on Commerce Avenue or something like that, but…… in the first place, I don’t even remember our way here. Which may make me sound like a failure of a salaryman, but in my defense, I’ve never walked through a medieval-style city before.

“Oh well, I can probably make do somehow by asking passersby for directions.”

“Seriously! This person!”

After shooting a sidelong glance at the me that is embarrassedly muttering to myself, Claura briskly starts walking. But she stops almost immediately and whirls around to face me.

“What are you doing?! When the sun sets, the Inner Gate will close and we won’t be able to go through anymore!”

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Chapter 32: Senjoumai

While following behind the back of the Claura who is currently huffing with peevishness, I survey the Lelis citizens that we pass.

There are markets with lines of shops that look like stalls, and shopkeepers negotiating with such zeal that I can see saliva flying. Craftsmen strictly admonishing their apprentices at their storefronts. Young people and children delightedly stuffing their cheeks with sweets and fruits and grilled meats. Of course, the plaintive cries of beggars crawling on the bare ground, as well as angry voices from ongoing fights can also be heard mixed into the din.

I didn't really pay it much attention earlier, but there is indeed a canal running through the city, spanned by arch-like stone bridges. Ships of a huge variety of colors are going to and fro, carrying both goods and people.

Because the talks dragged on so long at the Magician Guild, it is now almost sunset.

"Could it be that that is the aforementioned Senjoumai?"

“Eh? Ahh, yes it is.”

While walking alongside the canal, which is so wide that it can almost be called the artery of the city, I notice several heavily ornamented boats slowly proceeding in a line, like a parade. There are large numbers of people crowding both banks and the bridges, staring transfixed at the dance stages set on top of the boats.

Lent an almost fantastical air by light sources similar to the Japanese andon, the stages are occupied by dancers veiled in red and white who are dancing serenely. Some of the ships also have musicians on board. Though calm, the tone color of their music somehow feels melancholic.

(T/N: Andon: fixed paper-enclosed lantern / paper-covered wooden stand housing a(n oil) lamp ~Akebi dictionary)

Because we are looking down at the boats from the bank of the canal, when all the dancers turn in unison, their dazzling costumes look like vividly brilliant fireworks all going off at the same time, leaving a deep impression with me.

“..... It really is beautiful, but isn’t it a bit subdued for a centerpiece of a festival?”

Claura sadly answers my thoughtless comment.

“Today’s programme is a requiem. For those sacrificed to the anki……”

“..... I see.”

This is a thought that had also risen up when I was fully appreciating the splendor of Sedia’s nature while travelling on the royal highway—this really isn’t

a game world, but one with real people living inside.

“.....”

“What are you doing?”

I naturally brought my palms together. This gesture might be incomprehensible for those in this world, but I don’t think it wrong to pay respects to those who have gone before us.

♥♦♣♠

After crossing several stone bridges, we are back in a street close to the city gates.

It is a street with rows of merchant houses hanging out elaborately ornamented signboards. This is apparently Commerce Avenue.

“Irudo’s…… I mean, Mora’s house is that one over there. After coming this far, you won’t get lost anymore, right?”

Fumu. Does that mean that Claura intends to turn back here? Well, this city is her home, so there’s no particular reason to have her stay, I guess.

“Thank you, Claura.”

“What is it? All I did was just show you the way.”

“No, it’s just that I’d forgotten to thank you properly for everything up to now. Really, thank you very much.”

“..... I, I was just fulfilling my duty, that’s all.”

“Even if so, I am thankful. You are my benefactor.”

“Benefactor of a ‘Great Wizard’? So, I can look forward to quite a few benefits in the future?”

So says Claura sarcastically while shrugging her shoulders.

“Uu, that’s a bit, um……”

I’ve begun to grow a bit more used to the mask of a Great Wizard, but I still find it very heavy.

“I’m just joking. I know full well that you are a kind person.”

If I had heard those words from a young woman while in the area around the pleasure quarters of modern Japan, my mind would automatically translate them into “I have no interest in you whatsoever.” I wonder whether, in this world, if I can consider them a compliment or not.

“However…… this is a world where anki can appear at any moment and kill anybody and their family. If there really is a true hero who can change that reality, I……”

“Ah—……”

“I don’t know what choice you will pick, but I'm sure that it will be a good choice. But well…… whether or not I will be able to support it is a different matter altogether. Either way, fare you well.”

While I’m standing stunned, she gets up and walks off jauntily.

♥♦♣♠

“Truly, your presence is such a huge honor!”

“Gio-san, please eat a lot more!”

After safely reaching Irudo’s house—mansion, more like—I was greeted with a grand welcome.

Irudo, Mora, and many of the servants continued lavishing thanks on me.

A huge feast was lined up on a splendid table, and after hearing that Mora had also gone into the kitchen and pitched in with the cooking, I felt like I would get punished if I didn’t eat it.

First order of business, I asked Irudo whether his cargo, which was stored in the storeroom at Jiiteias Castle last I heard, had been properly returned by the Carbanera knights, and he confirmed that it had been done without any problems. Mora did get a bit huffy though, saying “But I was supposed to go retrieve it!”.

Next, Irudo offered to exchange the IOU that he’d given me for the remaining 3,000 gold coins that he was supposed to pay me—in Sedam’s and his party’s stead—for rescuing Mora from the mountain bandits that had abducted her. I was thinking that I should just obediently accept the money, but then a brilliant idea occurred to me.

“In exchange for that 3,000, I want to entrust you with a job.”

“A job worth 3,000 gold coins? What is it you would have me do, what manner of job is it?”

“The Order has given me ownership over that fort. But well, it’s quite inconvenient if I’m the only person there. I want you to find me trustworthy servants, as well as someone can see oversee them.”

Irudo slapped his knee and responded immediately.

“I see. Duly acknowledged. Am I correct in assuming that their deposits and preparatory costs are all to be covered with this 3,000?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Do you have any particular preferences?”

“Let me see…… well, generally speaking, if it is someone that you can trust, then I won’t have any complaints. But there is a one in a million chance that they might get caught up in my circumstances, so I would be grateful if they can protect at least themselves and are able to move quickly.”

“Understood. I shall find you the finest personnel there is.”

♥♦♣♠

“Dat’sh why I ‘old ‘em, Wishard-shama!”

One hour later, the earnest, intelligent merchant and father has already left us.

Right now, the person who is leaning on me and exhaling alcoholic fumes into my face is a completely different person who just happens to also have the name Irudo.

“Being frugal on the Senjoumai is—Idiots!—but den dat bashtard Dishlict Chief ……”

Apparently, the boats and dancers and musicians for Senjoumai are procured as a joint effort by all districts of the city. Irudo wanted to gather more donations for the cooperative, but was stopped by the person in charge of this district. So I hear for the 10th time now.

After hearing the heavy story of how he had personally raised Mora by himself after the death of his wife to anki ten years ago, I accidentally poured him too much to drink, so I suppose this state of affairs is partly my responsibility.

“I-, I’m so sorry, Gio-san. Father is weak to alcohol…… He usually isn’t like this though……”

Mora, who had been really high-strung during the banquet, has calmed down and is the one now looking mortified.

“Oh, don’t mind it. All men have moments when they want to get drunk and just grumble over their cup.”

“Is that how it is?”

“You over dere! No flirting in front of the farder! Mora ish only fourteen yearsh

old y'knaw~"

"Father!"

"Hah. Hah. Hah. Irudo, it seems that you haven't had enough yet!"

"Ohh, donchu know it! Ash eshpected of Wishard-shama!"

Irudo begins drinking straight from the bottle. In these situations, getting the drunkard to drink himself to unconsciousness is the fastest way. Of course, I carefully pace him so that he doesn't get acute alcohol poisoning.

♥♦♣♠

"Fuu……"

"Gugohhh……"

True enough, Irudo blacks out several minutes later. The servants, who still look afraid of me calling down a meteor at any moment, fearfully carry their master off to his bedroom.

I, too, have apparently had slightly too much to drink, what with so many worries tumbling around in my head.

"I'm really so very sorry, Gio-san. Father was so eager to meet and repay you, he got a bit carried away……"

So says Mora while pouring water for me.

“Ahh, thank you. And I keep saying this, but there’s really no need to be thatthankful……”

“Why wouldn’t I be!”

Mora now sounds slightly angry.

“Saving me from the mountain bandits, doing in such a huge number of anki, destroying a nest…… you’ve done so many amazing things for us!!”

“Well, that’s…… true, but……”

In comparison to me, who had been merely living casually as a single guy in Japan, Irudo had been working his butt off as an entrepreneur all while raising a daughter all by himself. Isn't he even more awesome?

“Because Gio-san was there, I, and everyone else, was saved!”

I suppose from an objective point of view, that’s true.

In the end, the power of wizardry is something that was only lent to me. It is the height of folly to think myself awesome or strong just because of it. However, on the other hand, not doing something that can be done with my power also cannot be called right.

“Is the reason why Gio-san is so stiff because you’re actually just a normal

person?”

“Uu.”

…… Now that I come to think of it, I had been 100% my bare self when the two of us first met. There’s no way this intelligent girl didn’t already figure it out.

“Um, that’s, I don’t really understand all the complicated stuff. All I know is that even if Gio-san is a normal person, you’re amazing, and amazing, but also really kind. And I’m sure you’ll help a lot more people from now on!”

With her cheeks dyed crimson after that declaration, Mora bows with great force, then turns to leave.

♥♦♣♠

“To tell me to change my life at this age……”

I take a sip of the water that Mora had poured me. Someone must have also squeezed some fruit juice into the jug, as it has a refreshingly sour tang.

Protecting the world, huh. Saving children that I’ve never even personally met, huh.

Such a heavy burden for a salaryman who had already fallen off his career track and had no more hope of promotion.

“If I’m really to do this, then I’m going to have to form an organization actually

capable of subjugating anki. And if possible, I would also need to identify the reason behind the outbreaks, and sever it at the source.”

Both are things that the people of this world spent centuries trying to accomplish, all to no avail.

But what would happen if a salaryman with the power of a Great Wizard joins hands with them?

“Let’s take up the challenge, why don’t we.”

Guess laid-back retirement life has now officially been relegated to the back burner.

It’s time to start taking this Great Wizard thing seriously.

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Chapter 33: To-Do List

Next morning.

I am having breakfast while cradling my head, which is currently throbbing from a hangover.

Despite the headache, however, my mood is not bad at all. Rather, I even think I feel vitality welling up from inside myself at having gained ‘a job to do.’ I thought I’d gotten sick of that salaryman’s mindset already though……

Mora is trying her hardest at table servicing, but Irudo is already not here.

As a merchant who has several groups of caravans to manage, he apparently has a lot to do early in the day. What vigor he has, in spite of all that drinking last night……

“Not only that, I think various customers have also started coming in the morning……”

So adds Mora, her face telling me that she doesn’t fully understand all the

details.

Well, it's good timing. While eating, let's take this time to let's straighten out our thoughts.

♥♦♣♠

First of all, I want to protect people from anki.

Of course, there are a lot of other problems in this world, not least of all war and poverty. However, I am not so full of hubris that I think myself capable of solving it all.

But anki. Anki is the one thing that cannot be tolerated.

I know this because I've seen and fought them first hand. Their existence is a wrongness on the cosmic level. They are an 'evil' that must be taken care of, even if it requires using irregularities such as myself.

To that end, what steps do I need to take?

Anki can appear at anytime and anywhere, which makes coming up with countermeasures extremely difficult. And even I do not have the capital to maintain the necessary military strength for an extended period of time. Watching the Carbanera Knight Order fret about paying its knights their wages has taught me this.

I can only think of two viable countermeasures off the top of my head.

First is for all countries to openly share all information on anki, and form an allied force whenever the need arises. The other is to found an anti-anki organization

that has full authority to cross national borders.

I should probably also help with each country's internal anti-anki measures. If I handle the fighting myself, I think I can win against any anki force. However, I can't be at several places at the same time. Children soldiers like the Lelis Magician Guild's 'magic soldiers' are definitely out of the question, but I can probably help raise each country's fighting capability with my technical knowledge and wizardry.

On the memo pad inside my head, I note down the two large items of 'Establish an anti-anki military alliance' and 'Found an anti-anki organization.'

Next, I write out the sub items that I need to do in order to achieve those big items, such as 'Strengthen the weight of my words to conduct negotiations with various countries' and 'Gather staff members.'

When I line them all up like this, the whole thing starts to look like a reallylarge undertaking.

"Muu…… I also need to create a place to develop magic items at my base……"

"Gio-san, you're not tasting any of this food, are you?"

Seeing me begin to vacantly gnaw on a loaf of freshly baked black bread, Mora's mouth twists into a ∧ and she glares at me.

♥♦♣♠

After finishing breakfast, I'll go out…… or such was my plan, but Irudo came back.

“Please pardon my disrespect last night, Wizard-sama. It seems that I caught you as you were heading out. If it is for business, is there anything that I can help you with?”

There is not even a hint left of last night’s disgraceful behavior.

“I’d feel bad, asking something of you on top of last night’s discussion.”

“Whatever your request, please just say the word.”

He responds immediately with the very definition of a serious face.

“Can you arrange for me to meet with the person closest to the Council within your personal connections?”

“That’s…… what would be the meeting for?”

Irudo’s face twists into a frown. Muu, is the request a bit too difficult?

“I want to ask about the anti-anki measures that Lelis has in place. And to offer my strength if it is needed.”

Hearing my harmless, inoffensive answer, Irudo does a 180 and brightens up.

“Is that so! Actually, I’ve been bombarded with a stream of emissaries since early this morning.”

“Emissaries?”

“Indeed. They must have already sniffed out the fact that Wizard-sama is staying at my house. They hailed from various Guilds and nobles, and even the Temple…… most of what they had to say involved a request to me to help arrange an audience with you so that they can their greetings.”

Oh wow, so that happened. Makes me feel like I did him a bad turn, good timing though it is.

“Seems I have caused you trouble. So, among those emissaries……”

“You can rest assured. The very first emissary was from Braus-san, Branch Leader of the Lelis Merchant Guild and Chairman of the Lelis Council. I shall immediately coordinate with his side’s schedule and arrange the meeting.”

“I-, is that so. Very well, I’ll leave it to you. It’ll be a great help.”

“Speak nothing of it! It is for my daughter’s great benefactor. Furthermore, after hearing your purpose, it is also my duty as a citizen of Lelis to help out.”

“I shall endeavor to answer your expectations. Oh, one more thing…… do you have any paper that I can write memos on?”

The Chronicles of a Lost Man in His Forties Founding a Nation *Commonsense is Hindering Me From Becoming TUEE* - Chapter 34

Chapter 34: Visualizing My Work

After being seen off by the unexpectedly cooperative Irudo and Mora, I went out.

In my breast pocket are the scrolls of blank white parchment that he gave me.

My physical description must have already circled around, as I see people surrounding me at a distance. Though not to the level of the fevered reception that I got the day I arrived, their gazes are still filled half with respect and half with awe. Well, the eyes of the villagers back in Yuule were more heavily colored with fear, so I suppose this is still better.

“Alright, let’s just get going.”

I try my best to look full of confidence by straightening my back and walking composedly.

♥♦♣♠

My destination is the Magician Guild. Yes, I remember the way now.

“Have you come to accept our offer from yesterday?”

The only person who comes out is the Vice-Leader of the Lelis Magician Guild, Yahman. Oh well, I suppose he’ll do for today.

I tell him that I want to see all the records that this branch has on anki, and that I want to sit in on an actual training session of the magic soldiers.

“Umm…… But showing the guild’s records to outsiders is……”

“‘Outsider’?”

I exaggeratedly repeat what he said back to him and look straight into his eyes while putting strength into my abdomen.

“Though it is important to stick to every single word of every single rule in effect, this investigation is indispensable for my consideration of the offer from the other day. Are you unable to help me?”

If I go about this like my usual self, I would deprecate myself a bit more. However, as a ‘Great Wizard,’ I can’t very well go around bowing left and right for merely this level of negotiation.

“N-, no, I am not saying that you are an outsider…… Y-, you’re already at least a, um, consultant! Yes, I shall make the necessary arrangements immediately.”

“Glad to hear it. Convey my greetings to Heldol-dono for me too, will you?”

♥♦♣♠

Before anything else, I need to know more about the anki.

Inside the Guild's large library, I pulled out every single book and scroll that had the word 'anki' in its title.

"Uohh, my back……"

After several hours of concentrating on the records, I realize a dull pain and let slip a moan.

On the inside, Gio's Constitution stat is 16, so this level is supposed to be a walk in the park, but I guess it just means that's how long I've been away from deskwork for.

"But still, based on all this, it seems that almost nothing is known about anki."

So I grumble to myself while gazing at all the information that I'd compiled.

Although there are a lot of books about anki, they had almost no information to offer that I didn't already know. Anki do not found countries nor societies. As soon as they are born from a [nest], they continue assaulting humans until they are killed…… If I had to say, they sound more sci-fi than fantasy.

However, I did learn a few things. First is the term Bleed.

It refers to 'a mass outbreak of anki.'

When they occur, they are catastrophes on the continent level that can easily wipe out a country or two. So far, there have been two Bleeds.

On the parchment I got from Irudo, I have noted down ‘Year 815: First Bleed occurs.’ By the way, the calendar is based on Shulendal’s founding year.

The current year is apparently Year 1300, so this was almost 500 years ago. During the incident, the entire eastern half of the continent was destroyed.

How this Bleed was pushed back is not clear, but there are three main reasons that people raise: humans discovering magic, an existence called ‘heavenly soldiers’ allying with the humans, and ‘heroes’ going around and destroying a large number of anki nests. Heavenly soldiers and heroes…… The location of the nest that birthed this outbreak—the source of this Bleed, in other words—is apparently a place called the [Valley of Earthly Calamity].

Next on my notes is ‘Year 1134: Second Bleed occurs.’ This is the incident where the Carbanera Knight Order played a huge part. It originated from a cave called the [Jaw of the Earth]. Although it was only about half the scale of the first Bleed, it still wiped out all of the countries and cities in the central part of the continent, and was the impetus behind Shulendal’s break up.

This time, an allied force of humans, elves, and dwarves ultimately met, and broke, the anki host at the Plains of Dawn (now called the Plains of Twilight). At the same time, several parties of extremely skilled adventurers successfully infiltrated the Jaw of the Earth and destroyed the nest inside. Compared to the first Bleed, records of this second one are more numerous and detailed. Whereas the first is ‘legend,’ the second is ‘war history’—that’s the feeling I get.

Ever since the second Bleed, anki nests have been appearing in various locations around the continent at the pace of one every few years. So it was right that the

last ten years of peace was unnatural.

“If the legends are included, it would mean that there were two previous allied forces.”

So I muttered to myself while doing stretches to loosen my back. Having precedents, that is good.

“There was also an unexpected discovery.”

On my note-taking parchment, there is now also a copied down map.

On top of it is the title ‘Continent of Sedia, Central Area.’

Indeed, with Liuus Lake as the center, there are 4 countries all around, one on each of the cardinal directions. In light of this positioning, it makes sense how the Liuus Union, of which Lelis is a part, is prospering so much through commerce. With this, I can now visualize the relative positions of all the places that I’ve heard about, including the Plains of Twilight, which is now a haunt for undead, the Valley of Earthly Calamity, the Jaw of the Earth, and even a few other new places with ominous names that sound right at home with the fantasy genre.

“Yagi used to draw ones like this all the time in his kanji practice notebook, didn’t he……”

I inadvertently look off into the distance while reminiscing about my school days. Then I slap both of my cheeks with my hands and rouse myself.

Because this is not a game, but a real world that I am planning to save.